St. Raphael

Signature Site

Strategy

RESUME :
Stratégie de la région caractéristique St. Raphael

Introduction

La région caractéristique St. Raphael (« région caractéristique ») est une zone de forêt boréale et de voies navigables reliées entre elles située en région éloignée. Elle couvre plus de 150 000 hectares dans le nord-ouest de l'Ontario (voir figure 1). On trouve dans cette zone toute une gamme de valeurs naturelles, culturelles et récréatives, et elle est reconnue pour ses paysages extraordinaires, son caractère éloigné, la pêche à la mouche et ses itinéraires de canotage circulaires. Cet ensemble de caractéristiques a fait en sorte que, en1999, on a ciblé la région St. Raphael comme l'une des neuf « zones (ou région) caractéristiques » dans le cadre la Stratégie d'aménagement du territoire du Patrimoine vital de l'Ontario (Stratégie d'aménagement du territoire).

Les terres et les cours d'eau à l'intérieur de la caractéristique St. Raphael font partie de deux catégories d'aménagement du territoire : un parc provincial et une zone de gestion valorisée. Le parc provincial St. Raphael est un parc de catégorie aquatique et renferme un grand nombre des voies navigables et des rivages de la région caractéristique. Ce parc entoure un paysage sauvage qui a été désigné comme la zone de gestion valorisée Miniss, une zone de gestion valorisée en région éloignée. Les terres qui entourent la région caractéristique sont gérées en tant que zone d'utilisation générale par le ministère des Richesses naturelles.

L'énoncé de vision de la région caractéristique St. Raphael est le suivant :

« Préserver et protéger les particularités et richesses uniques de la région caractéristique St. Raphael tout en maintenant et en équilibrant les activités d'ordre traditionnel, économique et récréatif. »

Cette stratégie visant la région caractéristique St. Raphael a été préparée comme énoncé d'orientation de haut niveau. Il permettra d'orienter la mise au point d'un plan de gestion pour le parc provincial St. Raphael ainsi qu'un plan de gestion des ressources pour la zone de gestion valorisée Miniss.

La Stratégie de la région caractéristique St. Raphael a été mise au point dans le cadre d'un processus exhaustif de planification générale, y compris des consultations auprès des Autochtones et du public à chaque stade de développement.

Les étapes de planification ont été les suivants :

1. 1. Élaboration des cadres de références (mars 2003)
2. Invitation du public à participer (avril 2003)
3. Collecte de l'information et mise au point d'un document préliminaire (janvier 2004)
4. Mise au point d'un document sur les problèmes et les options (novembre 2004)
5. Mise au point d'une stratégie préliminaire (novembre 2005)
6. Achèvement du document final sur la *Stratégie de la région caractéristique St. Raphael* (août 2006)

Utilisation par les Autochtones

La région caractéristique St. Raphael empiète sur la zone de traité de la nation Nishnawbe-Aski (Traité n° 9). Une partie de la région caractéristique empiète aussi sur le territoire documenté de la nation du Traité n° 3. Les collectivités de l'Ojibway Nation of Saugeen (Traité n° 3) et de la Première nation Mishkeegogamang (Traité n° 9) ont fait savoir que les terres sur lesquelles empiète la région caractéristique St. Raphael font partie de leur territoire traditionnel. Les membres de ces collectivités sont très attachés aux eaux et terres qui composent et entourent la région caractéristique. Le MRN reconnaît l'importance de la culture autochtone et de leur territoire traditionnel. Les Autochtones ont indiqué qu'ils font la chasse, le piégeage, la pêche, la cueillette et se déplacent sur cette région caractéristique. Ils pourront poursuivre ces activités en tenant compte de la sécurité publique, de la conservation et d'autres considérations.

Le ministère des Richesses naturelles travaillera en collaboration avec les Autochtones pour cibler des possibilités économiques dans les environs de la région caractéristique. Le ministère continuera aussi à répertorier et à documenter des aires d'importance culturelle dans la région caractéristique et en tiendra compte dans la planification de sa gestion.

Terres adjacentes

Les activités dans la zone d'utilisation générale adjacente sont susceptibles d'avoir des répercussions sur les valeurs de la région caractéristique. Plus particulièrement, il se peut que les caractéristiques d'éloignement soient perturbées dans la zone d'utilisation générale par les activités qui ont lieu de façon adjacente à la région caractéristique. La

planification des activités dans la zone d'utilisation générale adjacente devra tenir compte des répercussions de ces activités sur les valeurs de la région caractéristique et en atténuer les effets dans la mesure du possible. Le personnel du bureau de district du MRN travaillera en collaboration avec celui de Parcs Ontario lors de l'examen des aménagements du territoire au palier local et des projets de gestion des ressources prévues sur les terres adjacentes pour s'assurer qu'on tienne compte des valeurs de la région caractéristique et que des mesures d'atténuation appropriées sont adoptées. Les mesures visant à réduire les répercussions potentielles seront axées sur le maintien des caractéristiques d'éloignement et la protection des valeurs naturelles et culturelles sur les terres du parc qui font partie de la région caractéristique.

Patrimoine culturel

L'aménagement du territoire prévu en ce qui a trait au patrimoine culturel dans la région caractéristique St. Raphael est d'en protéger les ressources sur ce plan. Le ministère des Richesses naturelles continuera de travailler en collaboration avec les collectivités autochtones pour localiser, désigner et documenter les sites d'importance culturelle pour les Autochtones afin de favoriser, à l'avenir, la planification des ressources et la mise en œuvre de projets. Toutes les ressources du patrimoine culturel confirmées (par ex. les sites archéologiques enregistrés, les sites confirmés par un spécialiste du patrimoine culturel) seront protégées dans la région caractéristique. Dans les cas où une importante perturbation du sol proposée pour les sites d'intérêt en matière de patrimoine culturel viendrait déranger un certain site (par ex. sites au potentiel basé sur une modélisation prédictive), le protocole provincial sera de conserver cette valeur.

Sciences de la terre

L'aménagement prévu pour les sciences de la terre dans la région caractéristique St. Raphael est de protéger les caractéristiques sur le plan des sciences de la terre et de promouvoir les caractéristiques du parc par l'entremise de l'éducation du public. Des caractéristiques importantes et fragiles des sciences de la terre seront protégées dans le parc provincial St. Raphael. On évitera de toucher, dans la mesure du possible, aux caractéristiques du relief dans la zone de gestion valorisée Miniss lorsqu'on planifiera les chemins d'accès et les sites d'extraction d'agrégats.

L'extraction commerciale d'agrégats sera interdite dans la région caractéristique St. Raphael. Elle sera permise dans la zone de gestion valorisée Miniss si elle est essentielle aux activités soutenues de prospection et d'exploitation minières ainsi qu'à la construction et à l'entretien des routes.

L'énergie

Lorsque la région caractéristique St. Raphael a été créée, il n'y existait pas d'installation de production d'énergie ni aucune infrastructure liée à l'énergie. La production d'énergie à des fins commerciales est interdite dans le parc provincial St. Raphael. Parcs Ontario pourrait envisager de faire appel à des systèmes d'énergie renouvelable pour approvisionner le parc en énergie (c.-à-d. les installations nécessaires à l'exploitation du parc) si cette solution est plus économique et environnementale que les autres formes de production d'électricité. L'aménagement d'installations pour la production commerciale d'hydroénergie et d'énergie éolienne est interdit dans la zone de gestion valorisée Miniss en raison des répercussions négatives à long terme sur les caractéristiques d'éloignement, répercussions liées aux infrastructures nécessaires à la production de ces formes d'énergie. Des systèmes de production d'énergie renouvelable de petite envergure et destinés aux installations touristiques pourront être permis s'ils sont compatibles avec les valeurs de la région caractéristique. L'aménagement de corridors pour la transmission de services publics (énergie et communications) ne sera pas encouragé dans la région caractéristique, mais pourra être permis s'il n'existe aucune autre solution raisonnable.

Gestion des incendies

La *Stratégie ontarienne pour la gestion des incendies* établit l'orientation stratégique pour la gestion des incendies en Ontario. La région caractéristique est située dans la zone de suppression des incendies de la zone de gestion forestière boréale, dans laquelle la protection des vies humaines, des propriétés et des ressources naturelles est une priorité. Les incendies dans cette zone feront généralement l'objet d'une intervention agressive. Le plan de gestion du parc fournira une orientation supplémentaire quant à l'intervention en cas d'incendies dans le parc provincial St. Raphael, et si ceux-ci ont un effet positif sur la santé des écosystèmes. En plus de la planification de l'intervention en cas d'incendie, le

brûlage dirigé est une autre technique à laquelle on pourra faire appel pour réintroduire des incendies dans un écopaysage. Le brûlage dirigé comme méthode pour favoriser la régénération forestière fera l'objet d'étude lors de la planification de gestion du parc en ce qui a trait aux valeurs du parc et des terres qui lui sont adjacentes. Dans la zone de gestion valorisée Miniss, les incendies pourront aussi être utilisés comme outil de gestion, tout en tenant compte des valeurs sur les terres qui lui sont adjacentes.

La pêche

La pêche, principalement au doré et au brochet, est une activité aquatique populaire dans la région. Les pêcheurs résidents, les Autochtones et les clients hébergés dans les installations touristiques sont parmi les principaux groupes d'utilisateurs. L'orientation générale en ce qui a trait à la pêche dans la région caractéristique St. Raphael est de s'assurer de maintenir des populations saines de poissons indigènes. Le MRN entreprendra un examen et évaluera les mesures appropriées pour appuyer la gestion de la pêche dans la région caractéristique St. Raphael. On encouragera les exploitants touristiques à appuyer les projets de gestion de la pêche par l'entremise de partenariats de partage des coûts et des ressources. Dans le cadre de la planification de la gestion du parc, on pourrait étudier la possibilité d'interdire progressivement l'utilisation d'appâts vivants pour ne permettre que l'utilisation, dans le parc, d'appâts conservés ou d'espèces pêchées dans la région caractéristique St. Raphael

Foresterie

À l'époque où la région caractéristique St. Raphael a été créée, aucune récolte commerciale importante de bois de coupe n'avait eu lieu dans la zone. L'exploitation forestière commerciale est permise dans la partie de la région caractéristique qui est une zone de gestion valorisée. L'orientation prévue en ce qui a trait à l'exploitation forestière dans la ZGV Miniss est de s'assurer que les opérations soient effectuées de façon à protéger les valeurs de la région caractéristique. Cet objectif est essentiellement lié au maintien de l'aspect éloigné de la région caractéristique par l'entremise de techniques qui permettent l'exploitation d'un milieu en l'absence de chemins. Le plan de gestion des ressources pour la zone de gestion valorisée sera élaboré conformément à l'orientation prévue à la Stratégie d'aménagement du territoire voulant *« qu'il n'y ait aucune répercussion sur l'approvisionnement en bois et que le prix du bois ne soit affecté que dans des cas exceptionnels »* en raison des modifications aux pratiques de gestion des ressources dans les zones de gestion valorisée. Le plan de gestion du parc comprendra une orientation sur l'aménagement de l'accès et la fermeture des chemins dans tout le parc provincial St. Raphael. Des prescriptions seront élaborées pour protéger les valeurs de la région caractéristique et elles viendront s'ajouter aux directives en place en ce qui a trait à l'exploitation forestière.

Les ressources en fourrure et en appât

Il existe des exploitations de récolte commerciale de la fourrure (c.-à-d. de piégeage) et de récolte de poisson d'appât dans les environs de la région caractéristique. L'orientation en ce qui a trait à la récolte commerciale de la fourrure et du poisson d'appât dans la région caractéristique St. Raphael est de s'assurer que ces exploitations se poursuivent tout en respectant les valeurs de la région caractéristique. Les titulaires de permis qui exercent activement leurs activités continueront d'avoir accès à la région pour y poursuivre leur utilisation traditionnelle, sous réserve des orientations prévues au plan de gestion du parc provincial St. Raphael et de la zone de gestion valorisée Miniss.

Accès par voie terrestre

L'orientation principale quant à l'aménagement du territoire de la région caractéristique de la région St. Raphael est de fournir des possibilités d'accès en ce qui a trait aux utilisations récréatives et commerciales tout en s'assurant que les valeurs de la région caractéristiques soient protégées. On y arrivera en minimisant l'impact des chemins et des sentiers sur le relief et le paysage par l'entremise d'un accès limité bien planifié pour ce qui est des loisirs, et en fournissant des directives pour l'aménagement de l'accès à des fins commerciales.

Les politiques relatives aux parcs provinciaux permettent les traverses routières dans les parcs de catégorie aquatique, lorsque cela est nécessaire pour permettre aux opérations forestières de se poursuivre à l'extérieur des limites du parc. L'aménagement de nouveaux chemins à l'intérieur du parc provincial St. Raphael sera permis à des fins forestières. L'aménagement de chemins servant à la prospection et

à l'exploitation minières soutenues ou permettant leur production est aussi permis dans la zone de gestion valorisée Miniss, tout comme on pourra circuler dans le parc provincial St. Raphael sur les chemins forestiers existants ou dans les corridors d'accès approuvés. Les chemins d'accès pour les autres utilisateurs commerciaux (par ex. les trappeurs, les pêcheurs de poisson d'appât et les exploitants touristiques) et à des fins d'utilisation privée seront interdits dans la région caractéristique.

Les chemins donnant accès à la zone de gestion valorisée Miniss et qui traversent le parc provincial St. Raphael seront permis à trois points d'accès seulement. On ne permettra l'utilisation que d'un seul chemin à la fois pour traverser le parc à partir de la zone d'utilisation générale, sous réserve de quelques rares exceptions comme les besoins d'accès à des fins d'activité minière n'ayant pas lieu en même temps que les opérations forestières et les interventions d'urgence. Un nombre minimum de chemins sera aménagé dans la région caractéristique et leur densité sera minimale. Dans la mesure du possible, ils suivront les corridors en place (par ex. les promoteurs de projets de prospection et d'exploitation minières devront planifier et construire leurs routes en se servant des anciens lits de chemins forestiers) et seront construits seront des normes minimales conformément aux pratiques d'ingénierie approuvées. Les dispositions relatives à la gestion de l'accès quant aux normes de planification, de conception et de construction, les mesures quant au contrôle de l'accès, la fermeture et la remise en état des chemins dans la région caractéristique feront partie des plans de gestion du parc et de la ZGV.

L'utilisation de motoneiges et de véhicules tout terrain ne sera permise que sur les sentiers autorisés pour les déplacements en véhicule motorisé dans la région caractéristique St. Raphael. Un sentier autorisé est un sentier désigné dans le plan de gestion du parc ou le plan de gestion des ressources de la zone de gestion valorisée. Les sentiers utilisés de façon traditionnelle pour la récolte commerciale de la fourrure, les exploitations de pêche au poisson d'appât et la chasse à l'ours pourront devenir autorisés à la suite d'un examen à leur sujet.

Bien qu'on puisse envisager d'autoriser les sentiers déjà en place dans la région caractéristique St. Raphael, aucun nouveau sentier ne sera envisagé pour les déplacements en véhicule motorisé. On pourra changer le tracé des sentiers déjà en place dans le parc et servant à la récolte commerciale des ressources si on en démontre le besoin. Les demandes à cet effet doivent respecter les renseignements sur l'accès mentionnés à la section 3.1.10.1, et elles seront étudiées par Parcs Ontario et le personnel du bureau de district du ministère.

Dans la zone de gestion valorisée Miniss, les nouvelles demandes visant l'aménagement de sentiers à des fins commerciales et récréatives seront étudiées par le ministère des Richesses naturelles dans le cadre d'un plan de gestion de l'accès, d'une demande de permis de travail, d'une demande de cession ou d'une proposition d'aménagement.

La prospection et l'exploitation minières

La région caractéristique St. Raphael est dotée de caractéristiques géologiques qui peuvent présenter un intérêt pour les prospecteurs et ceux du secteur de la prospection minière. Les activités de prospection et d'exploitation minières sont permises dans la zone de gestion valorisée Miniss, mais sont interdites dans le parc provincial St. Raphael. La prospection et l'exploitation minières qui auront lieu dans la zone de gestion valorisée Miniss devront tenir compte des valeurs de la région caractéristique. Des directives quant aux pratiques optimales en ce qui a trait à la prospection minière dans les zones de gestion valorisées ont été mises au point par le ministère du Développement du Nord et des Mines en collaboration avec l'Association des prospecteurs de l'Ontario et du ministère des Richesses naturelles. Ces directives feront partie du plan de gestion des ressources pour la zone de gestion valorisée Miniss.

Loisirs

La chasse, la pêche, le canotage, le camping, l'appréciation du patrimoine et de la nature, la navigation de plaisance, le ski de fond et la raquette font partie des activités pratiquées par les amateurs de loisirs dans la région caractéristique St. Raphael. L'orientation générale en ce qui a trait aux loisirs dans la région caractéristique St. Raphael prévoit le maintien d'occasions récréatives en région éloignée ainsi que l'aménagement d'aires de loisirs en avant-pays. On étudiera aussi les possibilités en matière d'éducation et d'interprétation relatives aux valeurs de la région caractéristique.

Les itinéraires de canotages établis seront conservés et pourront être améliorés grâce à un entretien minimal (par ex. amélioration des portages). L'aménagement de nouvelles aires de camping en arrière-pays est permis et fera l'objet d'étude dans le cadre de la planification de l'aménagement, tout en tenant compte des valeurs et des besoins en loisirs de la région caractéristique. On cherchera à établir des partenariats avec les exploitants touristiques, les groupes de loisirs en plein air et les collectivités autochtones locales pour entretenir, au besoin, les endroits désignés pour faire des feux de camp et les portages, surtout dans les régions en arrière-pays. On envisagera la possibilité d'aménager une aire de loisirs et un point d'accès public en avant-pays sur le lac Minchin, qui est adjacent à la route principale 599, sous réserve d'une analyse plus poussée dans le cadre de la planification de la gestion du parc. Cette aire pourrait comprendre des installations de base comme un petit stationnement, une rampe de mise à l'eau pour les bateaux, des poubelles, des tables de pique-nique, des latrines et des emplacements de camping. Un deuxième point d'accès sera permis afin d'accommoder les voyageurs qui se dirigent vers la région caractéristique à partir des routes au sud et à l'ouest de la zone. Ces points d'accès pourraient être dotés d'un terrain de stationnement et de latrines.

La pratique de loisirs pourrait avoir des répercussions négatives sur certaines aires fragiles de la région caractéristique. Dans le parc provincial St. Raphael, les aires fragiles seront désignées et protégées par l'entremise d'une planification soigneuse et d'une surveillance des aires de loisirs et des activités récréatives. Dans la zone de gestion valorisée Miniss, les activités récréatives de faible intensité et non axées sur la consommation seront encouragées.

Le tourisme

Le ministère des Richesses naturelles reconnaît que les installations axées sur les ressources constituent une partie importante de l'industrie touristique en Ontario. L'orientation principale en matière de tourisme dans la région caractéristique St. Raphael est de maintenir une industrie touristique en région éloignée durable sur le plan écologique. Les exploitations touristiques autorisées pourront continuer leurs activités, pourvu que les ressources soient suffisantes pour les soutenir.

On pourra envisager l'agrandissement ou le déplacement des installations si les valeurs de la région caractéristique ne subissent pas de répercussions négatives. Lorsque appropriée, une tenure foncière améliorée pourra être envisagée pour les exploitations touristiques à l'intérieur de la région caractéristique. Les demandes visant l'aménagement de nouvelles installations devront s'appuyer sur des renseignements détaillés sur les ressources et faire partie d'un solide plan d'affaires qui démontre les avantages directs et durables pour les collectivités de la région et fournisse des revenus équitables pour la Couronne. L'examen de toute demande sera assorti de consultations auprès des parties intéressées de la région, des membres des collectivités autochtones et de la population.

Dans la région caractéristique, les exploitants touristiques accèdent principalement à leurs installations par hydravion. Ils pourront continuer de le faire, sous réserve des règlements du parc et de l'orientation prévue dans le plan de gestion du parc et pour la ZGV.

Gestion de la végétation

On trouve partout dans la région caractéristique des espèces et des communautés végétales d'importance locale et provinciale. L'orientation principale pour la gestion de la végétation dans la région caractéristique St. Raphael est de protéger les espèces et les communautés végétales rares, importantes et fragiles ainsi que d'empêcher l'introduction et la prolifération d'espèces non indigènes invasives. Les espèces et les communautés végétales rares et importantes du parc provincial St. Raphael seront protégées par l'entremise de la planification de la gestion du parc. Dans la zone de gestion valorisée Miniss, on tiendra compte des communautés végétales désignées comme étant fragiles ou d'importance culturelle dans le cadre de la planification de la gestion des ressources. On s'efforcera d'intégrer le savoir autochtone traditionnel touchant la végétation de la région caractéristique et son importance lors de la planification de gestion. Des mesures visant à empêcher et à contrôler la croissance et la dispersion des espèces non indigènes invasives seront précisées dans les plans de gestion élaborés pour le parc et pour la ZGV. Ces mesures seront axées sur des approches biologiques. L'extraction commerciale de la tourbe est interdite dans la région caractéristique.

Ressources aquatiques

Le maintien de la qualité de l'eau sera une priorité lors de la prise de décisions quant à la gestion de l'aménagement du territoire et des eaux de la région caractéristique St. Raphael. La santé de l'écosystème aquatique de la région caractéristique sera entretenue par l'entremise d'une planification soigneuse de l'utilisation des ressources terrestres et aquatiques se trouvant dans les ruisseaux, les lacs et les zones d'alimentation, ainsi que sur leurs terres adjacentes.

La faune

La diversité faunique de la région caractéristique St. Raphael est typique de la région boréale du nord-ouest de l'Ontario. Certaines espèces qu'on y trouve sont rares ou inhabituelles pour la région. L'orientation prévue pour la gestion de la faune est de contribuer à entretenir la santé des populations fauniques et d'appuyer la protection des espèces vulnérables par l'entremise d'une gestion durable des ressources terrestres et de leur utilisation dans la région caractéristique. En Ontario, la plupart des espèces fauniques sont protégées sur une base d'écopaysage (c.-à-d. des unités de gestion fauniques) et par l'entremise de gestion locale (par ex. la gestion des lignes de piégeage). Les directives provinciales quant à la gestion de la faune s'appliqueront aux activités dans la zone de gestion valorisée Miniss. Il se peut que des stratégies de protection valorisée des habitats soient intégrées aux plans de gestion pour le parc et la ZGV. Les études sur la faune et la recherche sur les espèces vulnérables se poursuivront dans la région caractéristique. Le savoir traditionnel autochtone quant à l'utilisation faunique du territoire sera une composante importante de la planification de la gestion des ressources.

On tiendra compte de l'habitat du caribou des bois par l'entremise d'un zonage approprié et de politiques d'intendance lors de la planification de la gestion du parc provincial St. Raphael. La protection du caribou des bois dans la zone de gestion valorisée Miniss sera appuyée par la mise en application des directives quant à l'aménagement forestier et toute autre orientation élaborée dans le cadre du plan de gestion des ressources pour la ZGV.

Prochaines étapes

La présente stratégie fournit une orientation globale pour l'aménagement des terres de la Couronne et la gestion des ressources dans la région caractéristique St. Raphael. La stratégie servira de guide lors de l'élaboration du plan de gestion pour le parc provincial St. Raphael et du plan de gestion des ressources pour la zone de gestion valorisée Miniss.

Les approches en ce qui a trait à la gestion ont été mises au point de façon à en arriver à une gestion durable des ressources qui soit conforme à la vision pour la région caractéristique St. Raphael. Les points prioritaires seront mis en œuvre dans le cadre d'une planification de la gestion ultérieure.

Les activités de surveillance permettront d'évaluer l'efficacité des objectifs et stratégies du plan de gestion par rapport à ses buts généraux ou sa vision. L'inspection des activités commerciales axées sur les ressources ayant lieu dans la région caractéristique fournira des données pour appuyer la surveillance de l'efficacité de la stratégie.

Consultations publiques

Des efforts importants ont été faits pour consulter la population à toutes les étapes du processus de planification. Le MRN continuera de travailler avec les parties et les membres du public intéressés alors que nous procédons à l'élaboration des plans pour le parc provincial et la zone de gestion valorisée.

Pour plus de renseignements, veuillez communiquer avec le MRN par écrit à l'adresse suivante :

Équipe de projet de la stratégie pour la région caractéristique St. Raphael
49, rue Prince, boîte 309
Sioux Lookout, ON
P8T 1A6

ou en envoyant un courriel à l'adresse suivante :

siouxlookoutdropbox@mnr.gov.on.ca

January 2007

Approval Statement

We are pleased to approve the St. Raphael Signature Site Strategy. This strategy will direct land use and resource management decisions for the protection, planning and development of natural resources in St. Raphael Signature Site for at least the next 20 years. Direction in this signature site strategy will be used to develop a park management plan for St. Raphael Provincial Park, and a resource management plan for the Miniss Enhanced Management Area.

St. Raphael Signature Site has had long-standing use by Aboriginal people, as well as by local residents and tourists. The area has been dubbed a canoeist's paradise and is known for what some consider an exceptional sport fishery. The signature site also provides prime habitat for woodland caribou and other wildlife. These attributes, coupled with the outstanding scenery and its remote location, prompted this area to be featured as a signature site through the Ontario's Living Legacy planning exercise. This signature site strategy was developed in order to establish land use and resource management direction that provides for both the conservation and development of the area's natural resources, while recognizing its important natural, cultural, recreational and remote values, and traditional uses

There were extensive public consultation efforts made throughout all stages of this planning process. MNR will continue to work with interested public and stakeholders as we move forward with park and enhanced management area plan development.

It is with our sincerest gratitude that we acknowledge the significant efforts, time and energy that participants contributed to this project.

Yours truly,

Jim Adams
Regional Director
Northwest Region-MNR

Adair Ireland-Smith
Managing Director
Ontario Parks-MNR

The Environmental Bill of Rights, the Statement of Environmental Values

In accordance with provisions outlined in the Environmental Bill of Rights, the Ministry of Natural Resources prepared a *Statement of Environmental Values*. It describes how the purposes of the Environmental Bill of Rights are to be considered whenever decisions are made which may significantly affect the environment.

The primary purpose of the Environmental Bill of Rights is "to protect, conserve and where reasonable, restore the integrity of the environment". Consistent with these principles, the Ministry of Natural Resources developed four objectives in its *Statement of Environmental Values*:

- to ensure the long-term health of ecosystems by protecting and conserving our valuable soil, aquatic resources, forest and wildlife resources as well as their biological foundations,
- to ensure the continuing availability of natural resources for the long-term benefit of the people of Ontario,
- to protect natural heritage and biological features of provincial significance; and,
- to protect human life, the resource base and physical property from the threats of forest fires, floods and erosion.

The ministry's *Statement of Environmental Values* has been considered in the development of this strategy for St. Raphael Signature Site.

Our Sustainable Future

The strategic direction provided in the document *Our Sustainable Future* further guides activities of the Ministry of Natural Resources, and was also considered in the preparation of the *St. Raphael Signature Site Strategy*. *Our Sustainable Future* confirms the vision of a healthy environment through sustainable development as the overall long-term goal of the Ministry of Natural Resources. The ministry's mission is to manage resources in an ecologically sustainable way to ensure that they are available for the use and enjoyment of future generations. *Our Sustainable Future* also highlights the ministry's commitment to the conservation of biodiversity.

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Prologue

Prior to discussing the Ontario government's approach to land use and resource management in St. Raphael Signature Site, it is important to reflect on past events that have helped shape present-day interests and uses on the landscape. It is also fundamental that the human history of the area be considered to help direct consultation and management decisions for the area.

Early ancestors of the Ojibway have the lengthiest history in northwestern Ontario. Until the 1600s, Ojibway people or Anishinaabe lived exclusively off the land for food, clothing and shelter. Fishing and gathering of berries, medicinal plants and wild rice occurred mainly in the summer and fall, while winter was a time for hunting and trapping. In Ojibway culture, material goods were not accumulated and everything that was borrowed from the land was used. The Ojibway did not believe in ownership of natural resources, rather they shared with and borrowed from the land.

Trapping dates back to the beginnings of Ojibway history. Animals were trapped for pelts and meat. Trading of pelts and handmade goods was customary between clan groups. Aboriginal people developed extensive waterway routes to transport and trade goods. These trade routes, and the intimate knowledge Aboriginals had of the landscape, were the foundations on which the historical fur trade was built.

Traditional purposes for trapping changed dramatically with the arrival of the first Europeans in the 1600s. Trappers traveled hundreds of kilometres to trade furs at Hudson's Bay Company trading posts, which began to emerge in the northern Ontario interior in the mid-1700s. Aboriginal people used their knowledge of the land to assist early European traders and explorers, guiding them inland in search of furs and new trade routes. They also built canoes, made snowshoes and provided food in return for trade goods and money.

During the late 1700s and through the 1800s, the Hudson's Bay Company established trading posts and trade links throughout the region, notably at Lake St. Joseph and Lac Seul. The waterways within St. Raphael Signature Site likely served as important transportation routes for furs and trade goods during this period.

Trading with Europeans and the interactions between the two cultures brought about changes in the traditional Aboriginal lifestyle. Their nomadic way of life was being transformed by more permanent communities, often near trading posts. Trade goods began to replace many hand-made tools; rifles replaced the bow and arrow and kettles replaced birch bark containers. Implements such as files, knives and axes made life easier for Aboriginal families. The elders believed technology was a gift not to be abused.

The 1900s saw great change and adjustment in northwestern Ontario, particularly for the Anishinaabe people. At the turn of the century, men were finding short-term work on railway and road building projects. The discovery of gold in the Pickle Lake area in 1929 also provided some employment. At least 14 companies were operating gold and silver mines by 1937, with each mine employing 50 to 100 people. Advances in technology coupled with increased settlers and setbacks from the Great Depression of the 1930s meant less work. However, Aboriginal people were able to survive by living off the land.

Prior to the development of land transportation routes, lakes and rivers were the main network for transporting goods, services and people in and out of the area. The completion of the Canadian National Railway through the Sioux Lookout area in 1910 expanded transportation to northwestern Ontario and brought the first new Canadian settlers to the area. A freight trail once ran through St. Raphael Signature Site to the Central Patricia Mine near Pickle Lake. This trail was originally built to transport supplies to the mine. Later, it was upgraded to accommodate freight trains and tractors. The trail can still be observed in some areas, but is mostly overgrown and has not been active since Highway 599 was extended

from Savant Lake to Pickle Lake in 1954. Many of the traditional waterway trade routes were later established as recreational canoe routes, including some in St. Raphael Signature Site. Portions of the freight trail have also been used as canoe portages. Canoe routes and portages are still used today and are an important recreational asset of the area.

Technological advancement was occurring at a rapid rate though the mid-1900s and the need for power was increasing in northwestern Ontario. In 1935, Ontario Hydro erected dams on the Albany River, at Rat Rapids and at Cedar Rapids, to provide more power to northwestern Ontario and eastern Manitoba. The Lake St. Joseph water diversion project of 1957 also provided increased hydro-electric generation potential. These projects caused great fluctuations in upstream and lake water levels which in turn caused severe beaver and muskrat population declines and caused people to relocate from their lakeshore homes.

In the 1950s, trapping was still a main source of income for many people in northwestern Ontario, particularly Aboriginal people. When world demand for furs declined in the 1960s, trapping for trade purposes virtually ceased. Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people still hold trap-lines in the signature site area. They trap mostly for beaver, otter, lynx, marten and muskrat. Most furs are sold at auction houses, but some are used to make clothing and other personal items.

In the early 1940s, commercial fishing began on lakes around St. Raphael Signature Site, largely on Lake St. Joseph. During the 1950s through the early 1970s, several commercial fisheries existed on larger lakes in the signature site. Some members of the Mishkeegogamang (formerly Osnaburgh) community held commercial fishing licences and fished signature site waters. Aboriginal fishermen sold walleye to local buyers who in turn supplied tourism resorts and mining camps with fish. As commercial fishing and tourism expanded, competition increased between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal fishermen. By 1985, commercial fisheries operations had ceased in the signature site.

Fishing for commercial purposes does still occur in the signature site; however, it is exclusive to acquiring bait resources. Bait harvesting operations have been ongoing for several decades. This use provides local income, as well as sources of live bait for tourism operations and local anglers.

The first tourism camps emerged in the area of the signature site in the mid-1960s. The success of these businesses has centred on quality angling opportunities in a wilderness setting. Although some of the camps have changed owners over the years, all original camps are still in operation today.

Many Aboriginal people continue traditional activities of berry picking, medicinal plant collection, trapping, hunting and fishing in the signature site, and retain a spiritual connection to the land. Recreational visitors explore the area in search of a remote back-country experience and in hopes of good fishing. For the people that use the area, whether for traditional, recreational or commercial purposes, there continues to be a strong commitment to continuity and stewardship of the waterways, ecology, and the natural and cultural attributes of St. Raphael Signature Site.

1.1 Introduction

St. Raphael Signature Site (the signature site) is a remote area of interconnecting waterways and boreal forest, encompassing more than 150,000 hectares in northwestern Ontario (see Figure 1). The area exhibits a range of natural, cultural and recreational values and is known for outstanding scenery, remote character, fly-in fishing and circular canoe routes. This combination of attributes prompted the St. Raphael landscape to be profiled as one of nine "featured areas" or signature sites in the *Ontario's Living Legacy Land Use Strategy* (Land Use Strategy) in 1999. It is the preservation and protection of these values, while maintaining traditional and future opportunities and uses, which provided the management focus of St. Raphael Signature Site and this strategy.

The signature site forms part of the Albany River watershed and includes more than 400 permanent water bodies and approximately 2,500 km of shoreline. Many of the larger bodies of water, linked by the St. Raphael, De Lesseps and Miniss rivers, form the main signature site waterway. The Little Pashkokogan River which flows out of Minchin Lake also links to this system by a portage between Minchin Lake and De Lesseps Lake. Two geological faults which underlie the area attribute to the unique circular water course configuration in the signature site area.

The importance of the St. Raphael area as a meeting place has long been recognized by Aboriginal people. The presence of many old portages and cultural areas demonstrates this. Coincidentally, from biblical teachings, St. Raphael is the patron saint of many things including travel, good health and happy meetings.

The lands and waters within St. Raphael Signature Site are assigned to two land use designations: a provincial park and an enhanced management area. St. Raphael Provincial Park is a waterway class park and contains many of the waterways and shorelines in the signature site. This park surrounds a remote landscape that has been designated as the Miniss Enhanced Management Area, a remote access enhanced management area. The area surrounding the signature site is managed as a general use area by the Ministry of Natural Resources (the ministry; MNR).

1.2 Purpose of this Document

This strategy for St. Raphael Signature Site has been prepared as a high-level direction statement. It will guide the development of a park management plan for St. Raphael Provincial Park and a resource management plan for the Miniss Enhanced Management Area. The strategy provides the overall vision for the signature site, and land use and resource management direction for the component land use designations. This document clarifies and builds on direction and land use intent provided in the Land Use Strategy.

Local land use and resource management projects must be carried out consistent with this signature site strategy. Staff of various program areas of the Ministry of Natural Resources (e.g., Ontario Parks and Field Services Division) will assist internal and external clients in project planning and with plan amendments as necessary to ensure the direction in this strategy is applied consistently and appropriately.

Current land use direction for St. Raphael Provincial Park (the park) and the Miniss Enhanced Management Area (enhanced management area; EMA) exists in the Crown Land Use Policy Atlas[1] (*http://crownlanduseatlas.mnr.gov.on.ca*). Area-specific policy for the park and the enhanced management area will be amended in accordance with direction in the subsequent park and EMA plans.

1 The Crown Land Use Policy Atlas is the official source of area-specific land use policy for Crown lands in a large part of Ontario. It is also a central location for finding proposed changes to land use direction.

1.3 Vision Statement

The vision statement defines the long-term strategic direction for St. Raphael Signature Site. Signature site values include significant and rare features, recreational attributes, remote character, and the economic importance of the area to local communities and to the Province of Ontario. In recognition of the signature site's values, the vision statement for St. Raphael Signature Site is:

> *"To preserve and protect the remote characteristics and unique values of St. Raphael Signature Site, while maintaining and balancing traditional, economic and recreational activities and opportunities.'*

In the context of this vision statement:

- *"preserve and protect"* means to perpetuate through time, the characteristics and values of St. Raphael Signature Site that define it as a special place in Ontario. The vision does not mean that all of these characteristics or values require formal regulated protection, but that they need to be considered as land use and resource management decisions are made.

- *"remote characteristics"* are those attributes that contribute to a feeling of isolation from the outside world. A sense of remoteness can be enhanced if an individual has expended great effort to access an area and encounters few people. It can also be affected by visual disturbances, noise levels, evidence of human influences over the natural environment, and geographic location within the province.
- *"unique values"* are natural[2] and cultural heritage features which are significant or rare[3] .
- *"maintaining and balancing traditional[4], economic and recreational activities and opportunities"* means that St. Raphael Signature Site has a history of use and potential to accommodate future use within its landscape.

1.4 St. Raphael Signature Site

Nine signature sites were created throughout central and northern Ontario as part of the Ontario's Living Legacy planning exercise, and were presented in the Land Use Strategy in 1999. Each signature site combines a variety of land use designations and demonstrates a range of natural, cultural and recreational values, providing opportunities for integrated resource management planning and activities.

The Land Use Strategy identified the scope and general management direction for each signature site and provided management intent for individual land use designations. This has guided the development of objectives and strategies for the management of St. Raphael Signature Site as outlined in this document.

St. Raphael Signature Site has important natural and cultural values, and significant recreation values which include tourism facilities and individual back-country opportunities. The area has natural heritage features typical of the boreal forest of northwestern Ontario, with some of these features considered to be locally to provincially significant or rare.

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2 Natural heritage features are features of the natural landscape (e.g., plant species or communities, geological features, species at risk).

3 Significant and rare features are determined through provincial protocol and through formal inventory and assessment.

4 Traditional activities refer to sanctioned activities that occurred on the landscape prior to the creation of the signature site

A portion of the forest resource (in the EMA) has been allocated for forest management activities. The area also has geology that may be of interest to the mineral exploration and mining sectors.

St. Raphael Signature Site is unique in both its size and configuration. The site is made up of a sizeable enhanced management area surrounded by a provincial park. A general use area surrounds the signature site. This signature site provides an opportunity to demonstrate how varying land uses can be planned and carried out concurrently within a framework that supports the greater vision for the area. Planning has focussed on integrating activities in the signature site so commercial activities can occur, while signature site values are protected and remote characteristics are maintained.

1.5 St. Raphael Provincial Park

Provincial parks are created to achieve a range of objectives. These objectives include the protection of natural and cultural heritage values, and to provide opportunities for outdoor recreation, heritage appreciation and tourism. St. Raphael Provincial Park (Land Use Area I.D. P2287) was one of 61 provincial parks established through Ontario's Living Legacy planning. It was regulated as a waterway class provincial park in 2003.

Waterway parks incorporate recreational water routes with representative natural features and historical resources, and are meant to provide high quality recreational and educational experiences. The focus of waterway parks is almost entirely on aquatic and shoreline (including back-shore) environments.

The Ministry of Natural Resources has a target to establish at least one waterway park in each of the province's 71 ecodistricts[5]. St. Raphael Provincial Park is the waterway class park for Ecodistrict 3S-5.

A portion of St. Raphael Provincial Park will be designated as a natural environment zone, which will satisfy the natural environment park class target for Ecodistrict 3S-5. This zone will include natural, cultural and aesthetic landscapes in which minimum development is required to support low-intensity recreational activities, and will be a minimum of 2000 hectares.

An Interim Management Statement for St. Raphael Provincial Park was completed in 2001. This document, in combination with this signature site strategy, will guide the use of natural resources and activities in the park until a park management plan is completed. The park management plan will provide direction for protection, development and operations in the park

1.6 Miniss Enhanced Management Area

Enhanced management areas have special features or values, and require more detailed land use direction to guide recreational and commercial uses. In some areas, certain uses may be subject to conditions that are designed to support the values that make the area special. The Miniss Enhanced Management Area (Land Use Area I.D. E2283a) was one of more than 80 enhanced management areas established by the Ministry of Natural Resources in 1999. It was categorized as a remote access enhanced management area.

Remote access enhanced management areas are intended to maintain the remote character of selected areas. Typically, these are relatively large areas that provide high-quality remote recreational experiences including hunting, fishing, canoeing and camping.

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5 Ecodistricts are geographical units that subdivide the province into areas with characteristic patterns of landform features.

Selective commercial activities are permitted; however, enhanced planning of these operations is required. Remote character will be retained primarily through establishing standards for the location, use and abandonment of roads and trails.

1.7 Description of Planning Area

1.7.1 Regional Setting and Access

St. Raphael Signature Site is located in northwestern Ontario within the Sioux Lookout administrative district of the Ministry of Natural Resources (see Figure 1). The signature site can be accessed from Highway 599 which commences at the Trans-Canada Highway 17 in Ignace. Another access route via Highway 72 extends from the Trans-Canada Highway in Dinorwic to the Municipality of Sioux Lookout. From Sioux Lookout, travel is northeast on Highway 516 which ends at Highway 599 just 10 kilometers north of Savant Lake. From the Township of Pickle Lake, the signature site can be accessed by traveling south on Highway 599 for approximately 85 kilometers.

At the time the signature site was established, there were a limited number of forestry roads in proximity to the signature site boundary in the surrounding Sioux Lookout General Use Area (general use area) (Land Use Area I.D. G2515). These roads will be deactivated to prevent public access after forest renewal activities have been completed. Forest management roads to the south of the signature site in the vicinity of Lawson Lake are also not available to the public for access to St. Raphael Provincial Park. Signs are located on primary forest access roads stating this road use restriction. Any new roads on lands adjacent to the signature site may require special management provisions to prevent access and protect signature site values (see Section 3.1.2: Adjacent Lands).

Travel to remote areas of the signature site is commonly by floatplane, with local service available out of the Savant Lake and Sioux Lookout areas. Several local tourism operators also provide air taxi services. To the south of the signature site, Via Rail Canada provides passenger service to Savant Lake and Sioux Lookout.

Established canoe routes follow the waterways surrounding and within the signature site (see Figure 1). Water routes link to Lake St. Joseph and the Albany River system to the northeast. Connections can also be made to Sioux Lookout using the Marchington River system, to Lac Seul via Lake St. Joseph, and to the waterways of Wabakimi Provincial Park.

1.7.2 Local Communities and Amenities

The closest communities to St. Raphael Signature Site are the Aboriginal communities of Mishkeegogamang First Nation to the northeast, and the Ojibway Nation of Saugeen to the south. Other local communities include the Township of Pickle Lake, the hamlets of Savant Lake and Silver Dollar, and the Municipality of Sioux Lookout (see Figure 1). Residents of communities in proximity to the signature site have close cultural and traditional ties to the natural environment and enjoy outdoor pursuits in the area.

Services for fuel and food items are available seasonally in all communities along Highway 599. There is a hotel in Savant Lake and seasonal lodging facilities in Silver Dollar. Pickle Lake has full services including medical facilities, automobile repair shops, goods suppliers, lodging, food and fuel. Sioux Lookout is the largest community in the area and offers full retail, transportation, government and medical services.

1.7.3 Aboriginal Communities

The community of Mishkeegogamang First Nation is located on Lake St. Joseph and Doghole Lake approximately 20 kilometres northeast of the signature site. The reserve, previously called Osnaburgh village, was relocated from its original location on Lake St. Joseph in 1960 to provide the community with access to Highway 599. Some members of Mishkeegogamang First Nation reside off the reserve in areas traditionally used for trapping and hunting; as far south as Lac Seul and as far north as Windigo Lake. Native habitations are found both within and adjacent to St. Raphael Signature Site. The people of Mishkeegogamang First Nation use the signature site for hunting, trapping and other traditional purposes.

Several generations of Aboriginal people from Ignace and Lac Seul have hunted and trapped in the Savant Lake area. This group first settled along Highway 599 in the community formerly known as the Savant Lake Indian Settlement. In 1997, the Ojibway Nation of Saugeen reserve was designated. The main settlement is on the north shore of Kashaweogama Lake. Members of the Ojibway Nation of Saugeen trap, hunt and fish in the signature site area.

1.8 Signature Site Planning and Strategy Development

1.8.1 Planning Stages

The *St. Raphael Signature Site Strategy* was developed as part of a comprehensive planning process complete with Aboriginal input and public consultation at each stage of development. The planning stages were as follows:

1. Development of the Terms of Reference (March 2003)
2. Invitation to Participate extended to the public (April 2003)
3. Information collection and development of a Background Document (January 2004)
4. Development of an Issues and Options Document (November 2004)
5. Development of a Preliminary Strategy (November 2005)
6. Completion of the ***St. Raphael Signature Site Strategy*** (January 2007)

A synopsis of the planning process, including planning stages, products and participants, is in Appendix A.

This strategy represents the final stage of higher-level planning for St. Raphael Signature Site. It provides long-term strategic direction for the signature site, and will support and direct future management planning. This document has been developed considering input provided by an advisory committee, local Aboriginal communities and other interested public (see Appendix B for a summary of public consultation). .

1.8.2 Aboriginal Involvement

St. Raphael Signature Site overlaps the treaty area of the Nishnawbe-Aski Nation (Treaty #9). A portion of the signature site also overlaps the documented territory of the Treaty #3 people. Communities of the Ojibway Nation of Saugeen (Treaty #3) and Mishkeegogamang First Nation (Treaty #9) have affirmed that land encompassed by St. Raphael Signature Site overlies their traditional use area. Members of these communities have strong ties to the waters and land that make up and surround the signature site. MNR recognizes the importance of Aboriginal culture and traditional land use.

The involvement of these Aboriginal communities was requested at all stages of development of the signature site strategy. Three representatives of the Mishkeegogamang First Nation participated as advisory committee members. One representative also participated on the planning team. The Ojibway Nation of Saugeen chose to have limited involvement. Contributions from Aboriginal people have been integral to the development of the *St. Raphael Signature Site Strategy*, and will be vital in future land use and resource management plans that are developed for the signature site (see Appendix A and B for further details on Aboriginal participation).

MNR has made efforts during this process to communicate with Aboriginal people in a manner which recognizes their tradition of sharing information orally. Participation will continue to be encouraged to assist with subsequent management planning.

1.8.3 Economic Opportunities for Aboriginal People

An important focus during the planning for St. Raphael Signature Site was the identification and facilitation of economic opportunities for local Aboriginal communities. This signature site strategy identifies and builds on business opportunities and positioning of Aboriginal people who have interest in benefiting from resource management and future operations in the signature site area. Some examples include:

- ensuring opportunities for Aboriginal involvement in the preparation of the signature site strategy, and management plans for the park and the enhanced management area,
- commitment to support Aboriginal communities so they may benefit from opportunities that may become available through facilities development, operations and maintenance projects in St. Raphael Provincial Park,
- exploring tourism opportunities in the signature site and adjacent area; and,
- working with the local forest industry to ensure continued involvement of Aboriginal communities in forest management related activities in the Miniss Enhanced Management Area.

Early in the planning for St. Raphael Signature Site, the Ministry of Natural Resources provided funding for a collection of Aboriginal values in the signature site area. This project was conducted by members of the Mishkeegogamang community. The information collected was used to assist in signature site planning. Further partnership opportunities may arise as management actions for St. Raphael Signature Site are implemented (e.g., portage clearing, fisheries work).

In January 2004, a Statement of Understanding between Mishkeegogamang First Nation and the Ministry of Natural Resources was signed. The statement established a process to develop partnerships and provide funding to enable Mishkeegogamang First Nation to examine economic development opportunities (e.g., tourism opportunities) that may become available through signature site planning. The purpose of this Statement of Understanding was to build capacity within the community.

1.9 Signature Site Highlights

St. Raphael Signature Site exemplifies the diverse landscape and pristine waters found in northwestern Ontario. The area supports significant landscape features, and wildlife and vegetation species that are both rare and representative of the region. The signature site displays a rich cultural heritage and offers a diverse array of recreational opportunities. The *St. Raphael Signature Site Background Document* provides greater detail on the information provided in this section.

The bedrock geology of the signature site is Precambrian Canadian Shield. Two major linear fault lines contribute to the unique physical characteristics of the area. The Miniss River Fault bisects the signature site and meets the Lake St. Joseph Fault in the northeastern extremity of the signature site. The Miniss River Fault is one of only two northeast-trending fault lines in Canada and is considered provincially significant due to its extent and accessibility. The Churchill Lake Batholith[6] is also considered to be provincially significant. The bedrock geology of the signature site contributes to geological representation targets of the provincial parks system.

Surficial geology has been shaped by repeated glaciation over the last two million years. The signature site offers an excellent range of landform complexes and features. Eskers are common throughout the signature site, and are diverse in size and morphology. Particularly interesting landform features include the Birdsfoot Esker formation and a double tombolo[7], both located on the south shore of Medcalf Lake. These features are within the park portion of the signature site. The fluted till moraine between the northeastern part of De Lesseps Lake and Medcalf Lake is also significant.

The signature site contains an extensive waterway system of over 400 permanent water bodies, including several larger lakes. Water bodies are interconnected by portions of the St. Raphael, Miniss, De Lesseps and

6 A batholith is a large mass of plutonic igneous rock that has been exposed by the erosion of overlying rock. The Churchill Lake Batholith has an exposed surface area of more than 100 square kilometers and reaches to unknown underground depths.

7 A tombolo is a sand spit which has joined two pieces of land which were previously separate (e.g., an island to the mainland). A double tombolo is formed from two separate sand spits that build from one landmass, joining it to an adjacent landmass at two points. A lagoon forms in the enclosure which eventually fills with sediment.

Pashkokogan river systems. The waterways link to Lake St. Joseph and on to the Albany River system, and to the Cat River and Marchington River systems. The abundance of lakes and rivers offer more than 2,500 kilometers of shoreline.

Twenty-one fish species have been identified in lakes within the signature site including pike, walleye and lake whitefish. Bait resources found in the signature site include various species of shiners and darters. One provincially rare species, a river darter, was reported in Churchill Lake in 1974; however, there have been none documented since. Historically, lake trout and lake sturgeon occupied some of the lakes in the signature site, however recent inventories indicate these species may no longer exist.

At least 17 species of mammals use the signature site including moose, forest-dwelling woodland caribou, black bear, pine marten, lynx and timber wolf. Over 80 bird species, 21 dragonfly and damselfly species, three types of frogs and one snake species have also been documented. Two types of birds and four dragonfly species are considered provincially rare, and two bird species are considered regionally rare. Seventy-three bird species are known or are presumed to nest in the signature site. Nesting sites for sandhill cranes, bald eagles, common terns, buffleheads, osprey and herons have either been documented or are likely to exist in the signature site, and are of management importance to MNR. Bald eagles are listed as an endangered species in some parts of Ontario. Due to the improved status of this species, it is no longer considered to be endangered in northern Ontario (i.e., north of the French and Mattawa rivers). The northern population was down-listed from endangered to a species of special concern on the provincial species at risk list in 2006. The signature site also provides habitat suitable for wolverine, another species at risk in the province.

Forest-dwelling woodland caribou (woodland caribou; caribou) are threatened in Ontario. This species (identified federally as the boreal population of woodland caribou) is also ranked as threatened in Canada. The signature site has important summer and winter habitat for woodland caribou. Most of the summer range is protected within St. Raphael Provincial Park. Many of the large lakes provide important spring/summer habitat for cow-calf pairs. Known caribou calving sites and nursery areas are located on islands and peninsulas of Churchill and Miniss lakes. It is highly probable that islands on Hooker, Vincent, St. Raphael and De Lesseps lakes are also occupied by caribou during the spring and summer for calf rearing, although further studies would be required to confirm level of use. Records of caribou sightings and sign indicate that winter use is mainly in the western EMA parcel of the signature site, as well as in the area to the south of Miniss Lake.

Vegetation in the signature site is typical of the boreal forest environment. At least 290 vascular plant species have been observed. Due to the unique physiography of the area, several significant species have flourished under ecological conditions uncommon in the region. Four provincially rare and 10 regionally significant plant species occur in the signature site, with five others noted as being locally significant.

Open wetlands comprise up to two per cent of the signature site and are primarily characterized by treed bogs found in kettle holes or bedrock depressions, and in poorly drained flat areas. Peatlands of black spruce swamp with sphagnum moss are scattered throughout the signature site. Cedar swamps can be found in limited areas where there is ground water seepage. An extensive 180-hectare peatland complex exists south of Medcalf Lake and is considered significant due to its size and representation of several wetland communities. A black ash swamp is found in the northwest part of St. Raphael Lake and is considered an area of importance to Aboriginal people.

Black spruce and jack pine dominated forest stands make up at least 70 per cent of the forested landscape in the signature site, with some hardwood and mixed stands growing on upland areas and in river valleys. Forests growing on river floodplains exhibit the greatest natural diversity and support many species at the northern limit of their range. Small pockets of old-growth red pine

stands on Hooker Lake are also at the northern edge of their native range and are considered significant. Some individual trees are over 300 years old.

St. Raphael Signature Site demonstrates long-standing use by Aboriginal people and early settlers. Evidence includes pictographs and ceremonial sites, an Aboriginal village on Miniss Lake (which was in use until the 1970s), sites associated with trade routes during the 1800s, trails used for freight hauling in the early 1900s, and established portages.

Recreational opportunities within the signature site include fishing, hunting, canoeing, camping, motorized boating, snowmobiling, snowshoeing, wildlife viewing and more. The area provides a remote wilderness environment complete with outstanding scenery. Circular water routes provide for back-country canoeing and support what some consider an exceptional sport fishery. Sand beaches provide ideal areas for shore lunches and back-country camping.

In the 1920s, a number of lakes in and around the signature site were named by the Ontario Surveyor General. The lake names followed an aviation theme, with many being named after pilots lost during World War I. St. Raphael Lake was named after a plane downed on a trans-Atlantic flight. Hamilton Lake (which lies adjacent to the signature site) was named after Captain Hamilton who was the pilot of St. Raphael, and Minchin Lake after Captain Hamilton's co-pilot Colonel Frederick Minchin. De Lesseps Lake was named after Count de Lesseps, a pioneer in Canadian flying who perished during his flight over the Gulf of St. Lawrence. Medcalf Lake was named after Lieutenant James Victor Medcalf, a pilot also lost during World War I. Around the 1950s more lakes were named in response to revision mapping for this area, many after World War II casualties.

Other lakes in the signature site and surrounding area were named after Hudson's Bay Company employees, including Vincent Lake and Lawson Lake. Hooker Lake was named after Claude Hooker, who staked the eastern shore of Pickle Lake in the 1930s and built a general store in 1934. The name of Miniss Lake comes from Ojibway origin meaning 'island'. Spirit Lake and Ghost Lake were local names on maps dating back to at least 1908.

2.1 Planning Challenges

Planning and managing St. Raphael Signature Site in a manner that achieves the vision of preserving and protecting *remote characteristics and unique values, while maintaining and balancing traditional economic and recreational activities and opportunities* presents a number of challenges. The consideration of these challenges helped frame land use objectives and set much of the land use and management direction contained in this strategy.

The planning challenges were identified through a variety of mechanisms. Initially, challenges evolved out of planning associated with the development of the Land Use Strategy when general management direction was being developed for the signature site and land use intent was being established for St. Raphael Provincial Park and the Miniss Enhanced Management Area. Other challenges were identified by MNR staff based on their familiarity with the signature site area and evolving issues concerning resource use. An advisory committee, local Aboriginal community members, interested groups and individuals also brought forward matters of concern during the review of the background document, the issues and options document for the signature site, and the preliminary strategy (see Appendix B for a summary of public consultation).

The configuration of the component land use areas that make up St. Raphael Signature Site presents a unique challenge. Waterway parks in Ontario are typically linear in nature. St. Raphael Provincial Park is a circular waterway park which surrounds an enhanced management area. This has created planning challenges since access is required through the park in order to carry out commercial operations in the enhanced management area.

The challenges summarized in this section provided direction for the development of strategies and opportunities that will result in improved management, protection and wise use of St. Raphael Signature Site. Direction has been developed in this plan which addresses each of these challenges.

Public comments in the form of questions, suggestions and concerns were received that were outside of the mandate of planning for St. Raphael Signature Site. These were reviewed, however could not be addressed in this strategy. Comments were compiled in Appendix B (Table 2: Matters outside of the mandate of St. Raphael Signature Site planning). Responses answering questions and describing why suggestions could not be incorporated or concerns mitigated in this strategy have also been provided

2.1.1 Summary of Planning Challenges

Aboriginal Interests
- Constitutional and treaty rights must be respected
- Identification of Aboriginal areas of importance
- Balancing protection of important areas with other uses
- Identification of economic benefits for Aboriginal people from the signature site area
- Need for an effective consultation process and for further relationship building with each Aboriginal community in the signature site area

Access
- Protection of remote characteristics and other signature site values, with access development through the park and in the EMA
- Enforcement of motor vehicle restrictions on industry roads
- Unknown location and level of motorized use of recreation trails

Adjacent Lands
- Protection of signature site values, while resource and recreational activities occur in areas adjacent to the signature site

Cultural Heritage
- Limited knowledge of cultural heritage sites hinders ability to protect and conserve these areas
- Restrictions on viewing sensitive data often results in poor understanding of where cultural heritage resources are located and their significance
- Effects of roads through the park on cultural heritage resources (e.g., portages)
- Preservation of overgrown historic trails and camps

Earth Science
- Impacts from increased recreational activity within the park
- Impacts from construction of roads and other activities in the EMA on significant surficial geology features

Fisheries
- Management of fisheries resources with limited data
- Management of sport fish harvesting in an interconnected waterway
- Potential for the introduction of exotic fish species (e.g., invasive non-native bait species)

Forestry and Mining
- Impacts of roads on portage trails and canoe routes
- Providing clear direction for industry to operate in the EMA while balancing the needs of industry, maintaining remote characteristics and protecting other signature site values and uses

Government Resources
- Availability and allocation of funding will be in accordance with government and ministry priorities for research, monitoring and enforcement

Park Operations and Zoning
- Potential use restrictions and other park policies to protect signature site values need to take into account existing uses and infrastructure
- Long-term development and operation of the park needs to be explored to support recreational needs and the potential for Aboriginal economic opportunities

Recreation
- Traditional, new and improved recreational access, campsites and facilities must protect signature site values
- Managing conflicts between recreational user groups (e.g., between motorized and non-motorized recreationists)
- Disposal of human waste and litter

Tourism
- Impacts of industrial activities on remote tourism values
- Managing conflicts between facilities-based tourism activities and individual (unassisted) back-country uses
- Reliance of tourism industry on fisheries resources
- Need for improved dialogue with tourism operators to work towards common goals for the signature site

Vegetation
- Protection of rare, significant and sensitive species in the signature site (e.g., red pine stands in the park)
- Preventing further introduction and spread of non-native plant species
- Preventing inadvertent herbicide application in the park from the adjacent EMA and general use area

Water Quality
- Improve coordinated efforts of the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Ministry of the Environment to measure and monitor water quality

Wildlife
- Protecting species at risk
- Identification and conservation of rare and important habitat (e.g., sandhill crane nesting sites, woodland caribou calving islands)

2.1.2 Building Stronger Relationships with Aboriginal Communities

The Ministry of Natural Resources is committed to continual relationship building with local Aboriginal communities. Some factors cited by Aboriginal people as hindering relationship building include the process MNR has for allocating and managing natural resources, interference with the exercise of constitutionally protected rights (e.g., impacts of timber harvesting on trapping activities), and the challenges of developing economic ventures because of government administration requirements. Throughout the planning process for St. Raphael Signature Site, there were further concerns expressed about the adequacy of the consultation framework applied to signature site planning. The Ministry of Natural Resources made considerable efforts to respond positively to these matters.

Dialogue will continue with Aboriginal communities regarding their involvement and partnership in natural and cultural heritage protection and signature site management, as well as other economic opportunities that may develop.

2.2 Establishing Signature Site Objectives

Land use and resource management objectives were established based on the vision for the signature site. Objectives were first presented in the *St. Raphael Signature Site Issues and Options Document* and were refined in the preliminary strategy and in this final strategy. The objectives relate to the overall vision *to preserve and protect the remote characteristics and unique values of St. Raphael Signature Site, while maintaining and balancing traditional, economic and recreational activities and opportunities.*

The following objectives will guide the management and use of St. Raphael Signature Site.

Aboriginal Use
- To ensure that traditional resource use by Aboriginal people is recognized and respected
- To assist Aboriginal people in pursuing economic opportunities identified in the signature site area

Adjacent Lands
- To ensure signature site values are not negatively affected by activities on adjacent lands

Cultural Heritage
- To protect cultural heritage resources
- To provide education materials on historical uses of the signature site

Earth Science
- To protect and promote significant earth science features

Energy
- To support small-scale non-commercial renewable energy development as an alternative to non-renewable sources

Fire Management
- To maintain the diversity and distribution of natural vegetation species and communities through use of fire, with respect for safety, social and economic effects

Fisheries
- To sustain healthy native fish populations

Forestry
- To ensure forestry operations are carried out in manner that protects signature site values

Fur and Bait Resources
- To ensure commercial fur harvesting and bait operations operate in respect of signature site values

Land-based Access
- To make access available for recreational and commercial uses while maintaining signature site values

Mineral Exploration and Mining
- To encourage mineral exploration and mining activities that respect signature site values

Recreation
- To maintain remote recreational opportunities
- To provide front-country[8] recreational opportunities
- To identify opportunities for education and interpretation of signature site values

Tourism
- To ensure ecologically sustainable and remote tourism operations

Vegetation Management
- To protect rare, significant and sensitive vegetation species and communities
- To limit the introduction and proliferation of invasive non-native species

Water Quality
- To ensure no degradation of water quality occurs from signature site development or use

Wildlife
- To contribute to wildlife sustainability at a landscape level
- To protect species at risk and their habitat

3.1 St. Raphael Signature Site Land Use and Resource Management

The Ministry of Natural Resources' vision for Ontario's natural resources entails safeguarding the many vital contributions that they make to our lives. MNR is working to promote healthy sustainable ecosystems and the resource economies and communities that depend on them.

The following land use and resource management direction has been developed considering government mandate and policy, scientific information, and data collected in the signature site. Further guidance was provided from public comment on the preceding planning documents (i.e., background document, issues and options document for the signature site, preliminary strategy). The direction provided in this signature site strategy supports conservation and ecological sustainability for the area, and strives to balance and/or meet the needs and some of the wide-ranging desires of local Aboriginal communities, stakeholder groups and interested public.

The land use and resource management direction for St. Raphael Signature Site is presented by topic in the following sections. The overall intent related to the objectives is provided for each subject. Management strategies that support the objectives are then described. Strategies will be refined in the management plans for St. Raphael Provincial Park and the Miniss Enhanced Management Area. Other land use and resource management plans and activities for the signature site area must be consistent with the *St. Raphael Signature Site Strategy* (e.g., fisheries management plans, forest management activities).

The direction in this strategy does not preclude legislative, regulatory or other policy requirements. The direction is not intended to replace, but rather enhance provincial guidelines used for resource management planning and activities.

8 Front-country refers to recreational areas that are more accessible and better developed than remote or backcountry areas, and where recreational activities may be more formal or intensive.

3.1.1 Aboriginal Use

St. Raphael Signature Site overlaps traditional lands and waters of two Aboriginal communities. Aboriginal people have indicated they use the signature site area for hunting, trapping, fishing, gathering and travel. In addition, individual Aboriginal people live in and adjacent to the signature site. These uses may continue subject to public safety, conservation and other considerations.

An information guide for Aboriginal people was developed which summarizes the signature site planning process and attempts to answer questions raised during signature site planning. The guide also provides details of how Aboriginal communities have been, and may still get involved in signature site planning and management. This guide was provided to the Mishkeegogamang and Ojibway Nation of Saugeen communities in December 2005.

The Ministry of Natural Resources will work with Aboriginal communities to identify economic opportunities in the signature site area (see Section 1.8.5: Economic Opportunities for Aboriginal People). The ministry will also continue to identify and document sites of cultural significance in the signature site and will consider these in management planning (see Section 3.1.3: Cultural Heritage).

3.1.2 Adjacent Lands

Lands designated as Sioux Lookout General Use Area surround St. Raphael Signature Site. A full range of resource and recreational activities, governed by existing legislation and guided by government protocol, can occur in this general use area.

Activities in the adjacent general use area have the potential to impact signature site values. Specifically, remote characteristics could be adversely affected by activities that occur adjacent to the signature site. In planning activities in the adjacent general use area, implications of these activities on signature site values should be considered and impacts mitigated whenever feasible. This will be done through existing planning and approval processes.

Sanctioned activities on adjacent lands may also meet objectives of the planning exercise with respect to Aboriginal economic development and recreational access (see Section 1.8.3: Economic Opportunities for Aboriginal People; and Section 3.1.12: Recreation).

Direction

District ministry staff will work with Ontario Parks when reviewing local-level land use and resource management projects on adjacent lands to ensure signature site values are considered and appropriate mitigation measures employed. Measures to reduce potential effects will be centered on maintaining remote characteristics and protecting natural and cultural values in the park portion of the signature site. Remote characteristics will be maintained primarily through the prevention of unplanned access to St. Raphael Provincial Park from the general use area. Prescriptions applied to activities in the adjacent general use area will be described in resource management plans (e.g., forest management plans), or included as conditions on work permits, land use permits, or other such documentation.

3.1.3 Cultural Heritage

Local communities in the vicinity of the signature site are home to many Aboriginal families and descendents of European settlers with a long history in the area. Protection of Ontario's cultural heritage is important in the management of St. Raphael Signature Site.

The protection and appreciation of cultural heritage resources[9] is one of the objectives of the provincial parks system. There are also requirements to conserve cultural heritage resources on other Crown lands established through legislation, policy, guidelines and agreements.

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9 Cultural heritage resources are any feature of archaeological, historical or traditional use significance and may include terrestrial or underwater archaeological resources, structural remains and cultural landscapes. Cultural heritage resources are usually identified by federal or provincial agencies, municipalities, Municipal Heritage Committees or other equivalent local heritage groups, or local or regional Aboriginal band councils. The significance of a cultural heritage resource is determined through an assessment by a qualified archaeologist or cultural heritage specialist.

The land use intent for cultural heritage in St. Raphael Signature Site is to protect cultural heritage resources. Further research, documentation and public education of cultural heritage resources is advocated. The tourism sector is encouraged to incorporate cultural heritage education and appreciation into tourism ventures.

Direction

Elders in Aboriginal communities have passed on cultural tradition through oral history for generations. Some of this history has been communicated and documented for St. Raphael Signature Site as part of cultural inventory work conducted during forest management planning, and from information gathered through signature site planning. The Ministry of Natural Resources will continue to work in partnership with Aboriginal communities to locate, identify and document sites of Aboriginal cultural significance to assist in future resource management planning and project implementation. The location and identity of archaeological sites and other cultural heritage resources that may be vulnerable to disturbance will not be made public.

All confirmed cultural heritage resources (e.g., registered archaeological sites, sites affirmed by a cultural heritage specialist) will be protected in the signature site. These sites will be preserved in situ whenever possible and avoided as park facilities or activities in the enhanced management area are carried out. Where preservation is not possible, mitigation measures must be developed with the assistance of a cultural heritage specialist.

Cultural heritage resources in the park will be placed in appropriate zones which will be identified and described in the management plan for St. Raphael Provincial Park. Existing back-country recreation sites may be relocated if there is a demonstrated negative impact to cultural values.

Where site disturbance resulting in considerable ground disturbance is proposed (e.g., road construction involving soil disturbance, aggregate pits, intensive forest harvesting operations, tourism facility) in areas of cultural heritage interest (e.g., high-potential sites based on predictive modeling), provincial protocol (e.g., Cultural Heritage Technical Guideline for Projects Planned Under MNR's Class EA-Resource Stewardship and Facilities Development Projects and Class EA-Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves, input from a provincial cultural heritage specialist during forest management planning) will be used to conserve this value.

Education materials that may be developed for park visitors will include an element of cultural heritage appreciation. Existing and future tourism operators and outfitters will be encouraged to incorporate cultural heritage education into their businesses. This may involve the use of traditional canoe routes and portages, or the re-creation of authentic Aboriginal heritage and historical experiences. Opportunities for local Aboriginal people to develop cultural tourism in the signature site may also exist (see Section 3.1.13: Tourism).

3.1.4 Earth Science

Earth science features are defined as the physical elements of the natural landscape created by the earth's processes. They are distinguished by their composition, structure, and internal and external form. Earth science conservation relates to the protection of representative features of the province's geological history and their physical expression on the landscape through a system of protected areas. St. Raphael Signature Site contains provincially, regionally and locally significant bedrock and landform features, the majority of which are located within St. Raphael Provincial Park.

Commercial tourism and recreation have had minimal impact on earth science features in the signature site. Features exposed along lake shorelines may draw signature site users, increasing foot traffic and camping. There are earth science features in the Miniss Enhanced Management Area that may be of interest to the mineral exploration and mining sectors (see Section 3.1.11: Mineral Exploration and Mining).

The land use intent for earth science in St. Raphael Signature Site is to protect significant earth science features, and to promote features in the park through public education.

Direction

Significant and sensitive earth science features will be protected within St. Raphael Provincial Park. Although it would be difficult for recreational activities to physically impact earth science features, increased use may cause issues such as improper waste disposal. New tourism facilities will not be permitted on significant earth science features. New recreation areas (e.g., campsites) will be planned in consideration of aesthetics if developed on or near significant earth science features (e.g., the double tombolo and the Birdsfoot Esker on Medcalf Lake). Education and interpretive opportunities for earth science features may be included in information brochures or other materials that may be developed. Existing and future tourism operators and outfitters will be encouraged to incorporate earth science appreciation into their tourism programs.

Significant bedrock features which underlie the Miniss Enhanced Management Area include the Churchill Batholith and the Miniss River Fault. A landform feature of significance is a fluted till plain in the east parcel of the EMA. These earth science features are not easily impacted by most human activities. Protection of significant earth science features is achieved through the provincial parks system, therefore formal strategies to protect earth science features in the EMA will not be provided in the resource management plan. Sensitive landform features will be avoided where possible during planning of access roads and aggregate extraction sites.

Commercial aggregate extraction will not be permitted in St. Raphael Signature Site. Aggregate extraction will be permitted in the Miniss Enhanced Management Area where essential for advanced exploration and mining activities, and for road construction and maintenance. The resource management plan for the EMA will provide general direction on the location and size, and on rehabilitation requirements for aggregate extraction sites. Alternative sources of aggregates outside of the signature site should be used where feasible.

There are older inactive aggregate pits adjacent to Highway 599 which are located in the signature site. These will be considered during planning for the park and the enhanced management area.

3.1.5 Energy

At the time it was established, there were no energy generation facilities, nor any energy-related infrastructure within St. Raphael Signature Site. Small-scale non-commercial renewable energy developments will be supported as an alternative to non-renewable sources, if compatible with signature site values.

Direction

3.1.5.1 Power Generation

Commercial power generation is not permitted in St. Raphael Provincial Park. Ontario Parks may consider the use of renewable energy systems for supplying the park's energy needs (i.e., facilities related to operating the park) where it proves more economical and environmentally feasible than other forms of generated electricity.

Commercial waterpower and wind power development is not permitted in the EMA due to the long-term negative impacts to remote characteristics from energy-related infrastructure (e.g., power lines and generating stations). Small-scale renewable energy systems to generate power for tourism facilities may be permitted if compatible with signature site values.

3.1.5.2 Utility Corridors

Corridors for new energy transmission or communication lines may be necessary to maintain essential public services to communities north of the signature site. For example, the Township of Pickle Lake has been examining the need of a second hydroelectric power line to the town site from power grids south of the community, possibly from Sioux Lookout or Ignace. Construction of utility corridors for energy transmission and communication lines is discouraged in the signature site but will be permitted if no reasonable alternatives exist. The impacts of construction and maintenance of utility corridors on signature site values must be considered. The Ministry of Natural Resources will review any such projects to ensure development in St. Raphael Provincial Park is minimized, and impacts to signature site values are mitigated where necessary.

3.1.6 Fire Management

Wildfires have been an important ecological influence in St. Raphael Signature Site. Earlier fire activity has been a factor in the composition of the area's dominant even-aged forest stands. Small fires have been recorded in the signature site in the last century, with the largest being in 1996. This fire occurred in the Medcalf Lake and Miniss Lake area and burned over 8,000 hectares of the signature site landscape.

The land use intent for fire management in St. Raphael Signature Site is to maintain the diversity and distribution of natural vegetation species and communities through use of fire, with respect for safety, social and economic affects.

Direction

The *Forest Fire Management Strategy for Ontario* establishes strategic direction for fire management in the province. The signature site is located in the Boreal Forest Management Fire Suppression Zone, in which the protection of human life, property and natural resource values (e.g., wood supply) are priorities. Fires in this zone will generally receive a full fire suppression response. The park management plan will provide additional direction on fire response and use in St. Raphael Provincial Park where fire may have a positive impact on ecosystem health.

In addition to fire response planning, prescribed burning is another technique that can be used to reintroduce fire to a landscape. Old-growth red pine stands (located on Miniss and Hooker lakes) are features of significance in the provincial park component of the signature site, and have not regenerated successfully in all areas. Prescribed fire to induce forest regeneration will be explored during park management planning in consideration of park and adjacent land values. This will be done with the intent to perpetuate this species on the signature site landscape.

In the Miniss Enhanced Management Area, fire may also be used as a management tool with consideration for adjacent land values.

3.1.7 Fisheries

Aquatic resources in St. Raphael Signature Site draw anglers to the area. Fishing (mainly for walleye and pike) is a popular water-based activity. Primary user groups include resident anglers, Aboriginal people and guests staying at tourism facilities.

The Ministry of Natural Resources restructured the province's fisheries management zones, effective in 2007. The signature site waterways lie within Fisheries Management Zone 4.

Fisheries data is available for the larger lakes within the signature site. Information from previous survey work was analyzed by the Ministry of Natural Resources to estimate the annual sustainable fisheries production levels for 14 lakes in the signature site (i.e., through use of provincially accepted models). These results were compared to bed capacities assigned to the associated tourism camps. On six of these lakes the walleye fishery is at capacity. On the other eight lakes that were examined, modeling results indicate a limited capacity to support additional fish harvest.

The overall intent regarding fisheries in St. Raphael Signature Site is to ensure healthy native fish populations are sustained.

Direction

MNR will undertake a review, and investigate appropriate measures to support fisheries management in St. Raphael Signature Site. Fisheries work will be a cooperative effort between MNR's Field Services Division and Ontario Parks. A fisheries stewardship plan[10] for the signature site may be developed.

A goal of fisheries management in St. Raphael Signature Site is to provide sustainable resources for Aboriginal subsistence use, resident anglers and tourism operations. Management action will consider the needs of all users. No further allocations (i.e., additional or increased bed count) for tourism purposes will be made available until fisheries capacity is confirmed.

Tourism operators will be encouraged to support fisheries management projects through cost and resource sharing partnerships. Ventures with non-government organizations will also be considered to assist with fisheries work.

Prior to fisheries management planning for the signature site as described above, MNR will contact fisheries-based tourism operators on lakes that appear to be at capacity to discuss fisheries issues, resource conservation and individual business logistics. Sustainable fisheries management education will be a priority.

10 The terms Fisheries Stewardship Plan and Management Plan may be used interchangeably.

When St. Raphael Signature Site was established, there were no commercial fishing operations occurring. Commercial fish harvesting operations will not be authorized in the signature site.

Live bait has been used for sport fishing purposes in the signature site. The possession or use of bait for sport fishing in low-intensity use waterway provincial parks is prohibited under Ontario provincial parks policy (1992). The purpose of this policy is to limit the potential of importing and transferring exotic species. St. Raphael Provincial Park is considered a low-intensity waterway park because there is a low concentration of facilities. During park management planning, consideration may be given to phasing out the use of live bait, allowing only the use of preserved bait, or allowing only bait species harvested in St. Raphael Signature Site to be used within the park.

The federal government is proposing to prohibit the import, manufacture, and sale of lead sinkers and jigs for recreational fishing. Should this occur, it is expected that the availability of these products will rapidly decrease and use will be phased out of Canadian waters. The promotion of lead-free fishing gear will be included as part of informational material that may be developed for the park.

3.1.8 Forestry

At the time St. Raphael Signature Site was established, no large-scale commercial timber harvesting had occurred. Evidence of selective red pine harvesting around the turn of the twentieth century has been documented; however, the extent of early logging operations is unknown.

Commercial forestry operations are permitted in the EMA component of the signature site. The intent regarding forestry in the Miniss EMA is to ensure operations are carried out in a manner that protects signature site values. Achieving this objective will be essentially tied to maintaining the remote nature of the signature site through techniques that provide for a functionally roadless area. The enhanced management area resource management plan will be developed consistent with the Land Use Strategy direction that there will be *"no impact on wood supply, and only in exceptional cases will wood costs be affected"* as a result of modifications to resource management practices in enhanced management areas

Direction

Forestry operations in the Miniss Enhanced Management Area will be carried out through sustainable forest management practices consistent with Ontario government protocol. A planning focus will be the protection of signature site values, specifically remote characteristics. A key component to achieve this will be through careful access planning, which is further discussed in Section 3.1.10: Land-based Access. Forestry operations will be carried out in a manner that minimizes the number of areas under active operation at any one time.

The planning of forestry operations will consider timing windows, slash pile management, revegetation requirements for gravel/borrow pits and push-outs, and other mitigation for noise and visual affects. Additional direction will be provided in the enhanced management area resource management plan. Forest management plan review and operations compliance monitoring will assist in protecting signature site values.

The park management plan will contain direction on access development and closure of roads through St. Raphael Provincial Park (see Subsection 3.1.10.1: Roads). Prescriptions will be designed to protect signature site values and will supplement existing forest management guidelines.

Commercial herbicide use is not permitted within St. Raphael Provincial Park. In the Miniss EMA, forest renewal and vegetation control techniques that support the protection of signature site values will be adopted. Alternatives to herbicide use will be examined particularly adjacent to the irregular provincial park boundary (e.g., mechanical brushing). These will be explored further in the management plans for the park and enhanced management area. Aboriginal communities will be directly notified prior to the commencement of any herbicide spray program in the Miniss Enhanced Management Area.

3.1.9 Fur and Bait Resources

There are active commercial fur harvesting (i.e., trapping) and bait resource operations in the signature site area. Eleven commercial trap-lines and 17 bait harvest areas are located partially or entirely in the signature site. The intent for commercial fur and bait resource harvesting in St. Raphael Signature Site is to ensure operations continue in respect of signature site values.

The Ontario Fur Managers Federation assists the Ministry of Natural Resources in managing Ontario's wild fur program. The group administers certain components of the program including licensing, compilation of harvest data and the delivery of a trapper education program. This partnership will continue to be important in the management of fur resources in the signature site.

The Bait Association of Ontario works jointly with the Ministry of Natural Resources to manage bait resources in Ontario. This partnership will assist long-term sustainability of bait resources in St. Raphael Signature Site through promoting responsible resource management by means of training, inventory management and resource planning and development.

Direction

3.1.9.1 Fur Harvesting (Trapping)

Active licence holders will have continued traditional access and use of the signature site, subject to direction in the management plans for St. Raphael Provincial Park and the Miniss Enhanced Management Area. Established trails used to access trap-lines in the signature site will be authorized provided they are not causing negative environmental impacts or safety issues (see Subsection 3.1.10.2: Trails). Relocation of trails and cabins will be subject to review by the Ministry of Natural Resources. Construction of new cabins to support operations will be permitted in the Miniss Enhanced Management Area; however, in the park only relocations of cabins will be considered. Boat caches for commercial fur harvesters in the EMA will be considered on an individual basis. New boat caches in the park will also be considered. In the event that a trap-line licence becomes vacant, the licence will be reissued.

3.1.9.2 Bait Operations

Bait harvesting is permitted to continue in the signature site, but may be subject to conditions in the management plans for St. Raphael Provincial Park and the Miniss Enhanced Management Area. Motorized use of authorized trails and traditional use of waterways to access bait harvest areas is permitted in the signature site. Relocation of trails to access bait resources will be subject to review by the Ministry of Natural Resources (See Subsection 3.1.10.2: Trails). New boat caches in the park will be considered.

The construction of cabins for bait resource harvesting may be permitted in the Miniss Enhanced Management Area if there is a demonstrated need. Such applications will be reviewed and authorized as part of the ministry's land use permitting process. New boat caches for bait resource operations will be considered in the EMA on an individual basis. In the event that a bait harvest area licence becomes vacant, the licence will be reissued.

3.1.10 Land-based Access

St. Raphael Signature Site can be reached by air, through connecting lakes, rivers and established portages, and by road from Highway 599 (see Figure 1). Direction provided in this section addresses land-based access only. Access by water and air are discussed in sections 3.1.12 and 3.1.13: Recreation and Tourism.

Prior to the establishment of the signature site, trails for commercial fur harvesting, bait block access and black bear management activities were located at low densities throughout the area. One tourism operator was granted authority to construct a winter trail from Highway 599 to a facility in St. Raphael Provincial Park. Modest recreation trails (i.e., portages and trails to boat launches) to access the signature site waterways were established from Highway 599. Other trails for recreation and other uses may also have been established over time. No roads associated with forestry, mining or other commercial activities existed; however, there were logging roads in the general use area to the northwest and south of the signature site.

The primary land use intent for access in St. Raphael Signature Site is to provide access opportunities for recreational and commercial uses while maintaining signature site values. This will be achieved by minimizing impacts of roads and trails on the physical and visual landscape through limited well planned access for recreational purposes, and by providing direction for commercial access development and use.

Direction

3.1.10.1 Roads

The signature site presents a unique arrangement of land use components; a circular waterway park that almost entirely surrounds an enhanced management area. The site organization is further complicated because the EMA is divided into three parcels separated by parkland (see Figure 1). The west and central parcels of the EMA are inaccessible unless the park is crossed.

Provincial park policy allows for road crossings of waterway class provincial parks where necessary to maintain commercial forest operations outside park boundaries. New roads in St. Raphael Provincial Park will be permitted for forestry purposes. Due to the configuration of the signature site, the forest industry will need to cross the park in more than one location to access resources in the Miniss Enhanced Management Area.

Roads for advanced mineral exploration, development and/or production are also permitted in the Miniss Enhanced Management Area. Generally, roads across parks to access mining claims or leases are not permitted. However, due to the signature site's unique configuration, access for the purposes of advanced mineral exploration or mining will be permitted through the park on existing forest access roads or approved access corridors and must comply with road standards developed in the park management plan.

Access roads for other commercial users (e.g., trappers, bait resource harvesters and tourism operators) and for private use will not be considered in the signature site. Additional forest access corridors through St. Raphael Provincial Park to access resources north of the signature site will not be considered.

Motorized use of roads will be permitted by authorized users only (e.g., to gain access to active forest harvest or renewal areas), and to perform road maintenance and deactivation. Motor vehicle use of industry roads by the public, prospectors or other resource users will not be authorized. Monitoring of roads with public road use restrictions will be a priority.

Roads to access the Miniss Enhanced Management Area through St. Raphael Provincial Park will only be permitted via three crossing locations (see Figure 1). The crossing between Miniss and Arc lakes, although approved for use, is not preferred because of the presence of important woodland caribou habitat values in this locale (see Subsection 3.1.16.1 for caribou protection strategies). Only one road crossing of the park from the general use area will be active at any one time, with rare exceptions such as access requirements for mining activities that are not concurrent with forest operations, or in emergency response situations. The intent is to limit areas under active operation to support protection of remote characteristics, but not to preclude necessary works.

One primary access road from Highway 599 through the east parcel of the enhanced management area (see Figure 1) will also be permitted. Non-permanent roads not connected to the primary access road will also be permitted in this parcel, to access forest harvest areas as operationally necessary (e.g., south of Payne Lake).

Roads in the signature site will be kept to a minimum number and density, follow existing corridors where possible (e.g., mineral exploration and/or mining proponents plan and construct roads using old forestry road beds) and will be developed to a minimum standard in keeping with approved engineering practices. Roads will be selectively deactivated and/or rehabilitated (e.g., portions of road corridors through the park) following the completion of resource management activities (e.g., after harvesting and regeneration of a specific area, after mineral exploration and mining activities are complete). Design and construction of roads will facilitate effective access controls, road closures and rehabilitation, and must consider signature site values.

Access management provisions for route planning, road design and construction standards, access control measures and deactivation/rehabilitation of roads in the signature site will be included in the management plans for the park and the EMA. Considerations will include remote values (e.g., aesthetics), public safety, operational feasibility and cost to industry. Direction will be developed in consultation with industry professionals. Road applications must be accompanied by the access information requirements listed in section 3.1.10.3.

The planning for forest access road crossings into the west and central parcels of the Miniss Enhanced Management Area may commence prior to the completion of the park management plan as land use support for these crossings exists[11]. Advice will be provided to the forest management planning team as necessary, to ensure access direction developed during management planning for St. Raphael Provincial Park and the Miniss Enhanced Management Area is communicated. This will ensure access management strategies for the signature site are integrated into forest management planning. Forest management plans must conform to direction provided in management plans for the park and the enhanced management area, once completed.

3.1.10.2 Trails

For the purpose of this strategy, trails are narrow linear corridors with natural surfaces (i.e., no fill material supporting the trail base). Trails may be built for a specific purpose for short-term use (e.g., trails for mineral exploration), or for a longer period of time such as for certain commercial and recreational uses (e.g., trails to lakes in bait harvest blocks, canoe portage trails).

The use of snowmobiles and all-terrain vehicles will only be permitted on trails authorized for motorized vehicle use in St. Raphael Signature Site. An authorized trail is one that is identified in the park management plan or in the enhanced management area resource management plan.

11 In 2002, the Ontario Forest Accord Advisory Board (OFAAB), as part of its deliberations on commitments in the 1999 Ontario Forest Accord, provided recommendations on the number and location of primary forest roads required to access the Miniss Enhanced Management Area through St. Raphael Provincial Park. Two primary road corridors across the park were selected for consideration: a crossing between Vincent Lake and Ghost Lake to access the west parcel of the EMA, and a crossing between De Lesseps Lake and Lawson Lake to access the central parcel of the EMA. These crossings were included in the 2002-2022 Caribou Forest Management Plan. Although these two crossings had previously been corroborated on, they were independently reviewed and selected through the St. Raphael Signature Site planning process (which included public review) as suitable crossing points which support the vision for the signature site. In the absence of an approved park management plan, planning for these two crossings can proceed in conjunction with the forest management planning process. Land use support is provided in the Crown Land Use Policy Atlas policy report for St. Raphael Provincial Park.

Trails identified for recreation or other uses will be reviewed individually and may be authorized if location and level of use supports the vision for the signature site. Trails that have traditionally been used for commercial fur harvesting, bait harvesting operations and bear hunting services may become authorized pending further examination. MNR will collect trail information from existing users to support access management planning in the signature site. Trails that are not authorized will be closed and may require access controls and some rehabilitation.

While existing trails will be considered for authorization in St. Raphael Provincial Park, no new trails will be considered for motorized use. Opportunities for trail use agreements may exist (e.g., prospectors use existing authorized trails). New trails for non-motorized use may be considered.

Relocation of established commercial resource harvesting trails in the park may be permitted if there is a demonstrated need. Such applications must be accompanied by the access information requirements listed in section 3.1.10.3. Proposals will be reviewed by Ontario Parks and district ministry staff.

In the Miniss Enhanced Management Area, new commercial and recreational trail proposals will be reviewed by the Ministry of Natural Resources as part of an access management plan, a work permit application, a disposition request and/or a development proposal. Decisions will be governed by the need to protect signature site values such as caribou habitat, fisheries resources and remote characteristics.

Management direction on planning and development of trails in St. Raphael Signature Site will be provided in the management plans for the park and the enhanced management area.

3.1.10.3 Access Information Requirements

Broad access management considerations and careful access planning both in and adjacent to the signature site will be important to support the vision for the area. Below is a list detailing specific information that will be required in a proposal for a new road or trail, and in a trail relocation application, in or adjacent to the signature site. Through standard access planning and application processes (e.g., forest management planning, work permit to build a trail for fur harvesting) the following points must be considered and documented:

- purpose of road or trail (including type of use)
- location of road or trail (include map)
- location in relationship to other existing roads or trails
- season of use
- anticipated term of use
- standard of road/trail (i.e., width of travel surface, width of right-of-way, surface material)
- stream crossing requirements/structures
- impacts on unique values (e.g., significant earth science features, sandhill crane nesting sites)
- potential effects on remote characteristics
- impacts on other signature site users
- mitigation efforts
- use management strategy
- anticipated maintenance requirements
- deactivation plan

This information will be reviewed by the ministry in consideration of existing legislation and policy. Road and trail information will be held in a Ministry of Natural Resources database. Sensitive information will not be made available to the public.

3.1.11 Mineral Exploration and Mining

St. Raphael Signature Site has geology that may be of interest to prospectors and those in the mineral exploration sector. Mineral exploration and mining activities are permitted in the Miniss Enhanced Management Area, but are not allowed in St. Raphael Provincial Park. Mineral exploration and mining will be carried out in the EMA in a manner that considers signature site values.

Direction

The Ministry of Northern Development and Mines is the lead agency for mineral exploration and mining activities in Ontario. The Ministry of Natural Resources undertakes review of various activities related to mineral exploration and mining including road construction and water crossings. For activities planned in the signature site, such a review will ensure proposals respect the direction in this strategy, and include requirements described in the management plans for the park and the enhanced management area. The mineral exploration and mining sectors are encouraged to review land use direction in this document and incorporate as appropriate in project planning (i.e., Cultural Heritage, Land-based Access, Vegetation Management, Water Resources, Wildlife). Advanced planning of activities (e.g., ensuring road use agreements with forestry companies are in place, conducting cultural heritage assessments) will facilitate operations in the EMA.

Guidelines for mineral exploration best practices in enhanced management areas have been developed by the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines, in conjunction with the Ontario Prospectors Association and the Ministry of Natural Resources. The intent of these guidelines is to encourage mineral exploration activities which promote the conservation of natural and recreational values in enhanced management areas. These guidelines will be included in the resource management plan for the Miniss Enhanced Management Area. The Ministry of Natural Resources will support the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines in the facilitation, promotion and transfer of these guidelines to the mineral exploration community.

3.1.12 Recreation

Recreational use in the signature site is concentrated in St. Raphael Provincial Park. Activities enjoyed by recreationists include hunting, fishing, canoeing, camping, heritage and nature appreciation, boating, cross-country skiing and snowshoeing. A highlight is the expanse of circular waterways in the park portion of the signature site that are ideal for back-country canoeing.

The overall intent for recreation in St. Raphael Signature Site is to maintain remote recreational opportunities, as well as providing limited front-country recreation areas. Opportunities for education and interpretation of signature site values will also be explored. Recreational use and new development will be planned to minimize impacts to signature site values.

Direction

Recreational activities enjoyed in the signature site may continue with respect for signature site values and public safety. Where conflicts arise between recreational user groups (e.g., between motorboat boat users and back-country canoeists) measures may be taken to reduce these conflicts. Such measures may include restricting all or portions of some water-bodies to non-motorized boat use, and the identification (or relocation) of shore-lunch sites along major canoe routes. These measures will be identified in the park management plan. Conflicts associated with recreational uses in the enhanced management area will be managed as necessary.

Established canoe routes will be retained, and may be enhanced through limited maintenance (e.g., portage improvement). Traditional remote campsites along water routes which can withstand repeated use and are not in conflict with caribou calving or other signature site values will continue to be available for use. Development of new back-country campsites is permitted and will be explored during management planning in consideration of signature site values and recreational needs. Partnerships will be sought with tourism operators, outdoor recreation groups and local Aboriginal communities to maintain basic facilities such as fire pits and portages as needed, particularly in back-country areas.

To provide public access to the signature site, two formal land entry points will be permitted. These will be planned in the spirit of protecting the remote back-country recreation environment. Development of these two public access points will depend on funding, and partnership arrangements with local communities, interest groups, individuals, and/or stakeholders.

A front-country recreation area and public entry point may be developed at Minchin Lake adjacent to Highway 599 subject to further analysis during park management planning. This site would provide safe

public access to the signature site and expand back-country travel possibilities. This site may include basic facilities such as a small parking area, a boat launch, garbage disposals, picnic tables, privies and campsites. The design and construction of lakeshore projects will be compatible with the remote characteristics of the area.

A second public entry point will be permitted to accommodate travelers approaching the signature site from roads to the south and west of the area. To maintain the remote characteristics of the signature site and its waterways, this second point will be located outside of the signature site. The intent of this site will be to provide access to the signature site using non-mechanized means via a water route, portage trail, or both. The access point could include parking and privies, and will be subject to MNR's facility development requirements and procedures.

There is land access to signature site waterways from informal points off Highway 599. One of these sites is in the locale of the prospective front-country recreation area, and will be improved and remain available for use should development be deemed favourable. The use of other access areas off Highway 599 will not be promoted. They will be left to natural regeneration or blocked to prevent public access where safety or signature site values are at risk. These sites will be examined during park and enhanced management area planning to determine appropriate management actions. Traditional canoe routes (see Figure 1) will be retained for use.

MNR may consider enhancing traditional recreation sites or developing additional sites or facilities in the signature site. This will be largely dependent on level of public interest and use, funding, and the development of an operating plan for St. Raphael Provincial Park. Should private or public partnership opportunities for funding, facility development and maintenance become available, proposals will be considered which maintain remote characteristics and protect other signature site values. The ministry will give priority consideration to proposals submitted by local Aboriginal communities.

A district wide strategy for the protection of Crown canoe route values may be developed in the future. Such a strategy will assist in providing a consistent approach to protecting this recreation value in the Sioux Lookout district[12].

Camping for recreational purposes will be permitted. If St. Raphael Provincial Park becomes operational, a fee structure will be implemented.

No authorized private recreation camps (i.e., cottages) or private boat caches exist in the signature site. To maintain remoteness, land disposition for private recreation purposes will not be permitted.

There are sensitive areas (e.g., woodland caribou calving grounds, bird nesting sites, fish spawning areas, vulnerable plant communities) in the signature site that may be negatively affected by recreational use. Such activities may include camping, shore-lunch site use, hiking, hunting, fishing, motorboat use, snowmobile and all-terrain vehicle use, and aircraft landings. In St. Raphael Provincial Park, sensitive sites will be identified and protected through careful planning and monitoring of recreational areas and uses. The park management plan will identify restrictions for any recreational activities within the park. In the Miniss Enhanced Management Area, low impact and non-consumptive recreational activities will be encouraged.

Information on natural and cultural values, and recreational opportunities will be included in public educational material developed for the park and/or the signature site (e.g., back-country trip planning guide). Private sector partnerships (e.g., with naturalist groups, tourism operators, local businesses and municipalities) will be a key component of this initiative.

12 Interim direction for the protection of canoe route values was developed by MNR in 2001, to assist in preparing the 2002–2022 Caribou Forest Management Plan. This direction will be considered in any future planning for canoe route protection in the Sioux Lookout district.

3.1.13 Tourism

The land and waterways of St. Raphael Signature Site offer a particular experience that can only be found in remote northern Ontario. Tourism operations provide opportunities for visitors to discover and enjoy the signature site. The park affords long-term protection of wilderness which is a benefit for tourism operations in the area.

At the time St. Raphael Signature Site was established there were 10 commercial tourism facilities with operations in the signature site approved under land use permits or Crown leases. There were also three authorized commercial tourism boat caches. One facility on private property (excluded from the signature site land-base) has operations reliant on signature site resources. The primary activity associated with these tourism operations is sport fishing (see Section 3.1.7 for fisheries management strategies). There are also several regulated Bear Management Areas (BMAs) which include lands in the signature site. Some of these BMAs have been licensed to local tourism operators.

The Ministry of Natural Resources recognizes that resource-based facilities are an important part of Ontario's tourism industry. The province further recognizes the potential for diversified tourism opportunities including low impact non-consumptive ecotourism type activities.

The overall intent for tourism in St. Raphael Signature Site is to ensure an ecologically sustainable and remote tourism industry.

Direction

Authorized tourism operations will be permitted to continue provided there is resource capacity to support these activities (ecological sustainability). Expansion or relocation of facilities may be considered if signature site values are not negatively impacted. Facility expansion, upgrades or improvements must be designed to blend with the natural landscape and must incorporate environmentally sensitive construction techniques and materials to the maximum extent possible. Use of renewable energy sources to operate tourism establishments is encouraged.

Where appropriate, enhanced land tenure (i.e., from land use permit to Crown lease) may be considered for tourism operations within the signature site. Tourism operations will be inspected from time to time to ensure facilities and operations are in conformity with conditions in tenure documents and with signature site policies and management direction. For the private property owner, private-land stewardship will be encouraged to ensure operations are environmentally sound and sustainable, and are consistent with this signature site strategy. New land sales will not be considered in the signature site.

Development of new facilities may be considered which do not have a negative impact on signature site values. New tourism proposals will be considered during management planning for park and the EMA. Non-consumptive activities such as guided back-country canoeing and cultural heritage appreciation are encouraged. Proposals for new operations must be supported by detailed resource information and included in a sound business plan which demonstrates direct and sustainable benefits to local communities and provides a fair return to the Crown. Review of any proposal will include consultation with local stakeholders, Aboriginal communities and the general public. New commercial tourism boat caches will be considered on an individual basis.

Local Aboriginal people have expressed interest in developing tourism operations to generate economic benefits. Resource-based tourism opportunities in the vicinity of the signature site are being explored for ecological and economic feasibility. The potential for

cultural tourism also exists. Economic development discussions and facilitation will continue with interested parties (see Section 1.8.5: Economic Opportunities for Aboriginal People).

There are sensitive areas in the signature site that can be adversely impacted by human use (e.g., woodland caribou calving areas, nesting sites and fish spawning sites). Activities associated with tourism that may affect sensitive areas include shore-lunch site use, fishing and hunting, hiking, motorboat boat use, all-terrain vehicle and snowmobile use, and aircraft landings. The park management plan will provide policies regarding activities in proximity to sensitive areas within the park. Policies to address conflicts between user groups in the park will also be addressed in the park management plan. Tourism proposals in the Miniss Enhanced Management Area will be reviewed in consideration of signature site values.

Tourism operators access their facilities in the signature site predominantly by floatplane. This means of access will be permitted to continue as per provincial park regulations and direction provided in the management plan for the park and the EMA. One facility owner operates an airstrip within the park under the authority of a land use permit. Use of the airstrip will be examined during park management planning. Use of trails and roads constructed by the forest, mineral exploration or mining industries will not be available for motorized use by tourism operators or their guests.

To support resource management objectives in the signature site, reporting obligations for tourism operations will be examined as part of the fisheries review. An example may include operators supplying inventory (e.g., fish harvest data) and client services information (e.g., occupancy rates) to the Ministry of Natural Resources annually, or during renewal of permits or leases.

Use of Bear Management Areas may continue in the signature site. Operations in St. Raphael Provincial Park will be subject to conditions identified in the park management plan. Once the park management plan is complete, these conditions will be transferred to each Licence to Provide Bear Hunting Services for the portions of BMAs in the park.

3.1.14 Vegetation Management

For the purposes of this strategy, vegetation management refers to the conservation and management of signature site ground flora. Non-native species are those not native to Ontario, or species native to Ontario but not to the signature site. Invasive species are those likely to spread and negatively affect native ecosystems.

Locally to provincially significant plant species and communities are found throughout the signature site; many are associated with low-lying and shoreline areas. Provincially rare plant species have also been identified within St. Raphael Provincial Park. Old-growth red pine stands on islands in Miniss and Hooker lakes are provincially significant as they are growing at the northern extent of their native range. These stands are deteriorating and some are not regenerating due in part to a lack of fire activity (see Section 3.1.6: Fire Management).

The overall intent for vegetation management in St. Raphael Signature Site is to protect rare, significant and sensitive vegetation species and communities, and to prevent the introduction and proliferation of invasive non-native plant species.

Direction

Rare and significant vegetation species and communities in St. Raphael Provincial Park will be protected through park management planning. In the Miniss Enhanced Management Area, identified sensitive and culturally important vegetation communities (e.g., patterned fen in east EMA parcel near Highway 599 and known medicinal plant collection areas) will be considered during resource management planning. No ground disturbance will be permitted where threatened or endangered species exist. Conservation of vegetative ground cover will also be a priority, particularly where there is potential for erosion.

Efforts will be made to incorporate traditional Aboriginal knowledge of signature site vegetation and importance into management planning. The Ministry of Natural Resources will ensure that rare, significant and sensitive vegetation species and communities are considered when reviewing proposals for commercial and recreational development and uses.

Many riparian[13] areas in the signature site are protected in St. Raphael Provincial Park. In the Miniss Enhanced Management Area, existing guidelines will be used to retain riparian vegetation. Where areas are identified to be sensitive and guidelines do not mitigate concerns, more conservative measures will be required (e.g., additional setbacks from sensitive wetland areas such as the patterned fen near Highway 599).

Non-native plant species are present on campsites, trails and other clearings in the signature site. Measures to deter and control the growth and spread of invasive non-native species will be defined in the management plans for the park and the EMA, and will focus on biological approaches.

3.1.14.1 Peat Resources

Prior to the establishment of St. Raphael Signature Site, there had been no expressed interest in commercial peat extraction in the signature site. Commercial peat extraction is not permitted in St. Raphael Signature Site.

3.1.15 Water Resources

Maintaining water quality will be a priority in land use and water management decisions pertaining to St. Raphael Signature Site. Water quality conservation will be considered at a watershed level.

The Land Use Strategy states that water resources *are an integral component of all land use area designations*, and described the following objectives and considerations as relevant to all land use areas and planning:

- Protection and management of watersheds, headwaters and groundwater.
- Evaluating and mitigating potential impacts of land and resource use on water quality.
- Determining acceptable levels and types of landscape and shoreline alteration, and vegetation disturbance

These objectives and considerations were used to determine management intent for water resources which is to ensure no degradation of water quality occurs from signature site development and use.

Direction

Aquatic ecosystem health in the signature site area will be maintained through careful planning of land and resource uses (e.g., fuel storage areas) in and adjacent to streams, lakes and recharge areas. Development and site alteration will be restricted in or near sensitive surface and ground water features such that hydrological functions are protected. Water crossings in the signature site will be monitored for potential impacts on water quality (e.g., sedimentation), and deactivated once no longer required for industry purposes. Additional details will be supplied as necessary in the management plans for the park and the EMA.

The Ministry of the Environment has the mandate to protect water quality for public use and consumption. The Ministry of Natural Resources will play an important stewardship role through planning and monitoring potential pollution-source sites (e.g., development zones in the park). Should commercial and recreational use increase in the signature site, more rigorous water quality monitoring and testing may be required.

3.1.16 Wildlife

Wildlife diversity in the St. Raphael Signature Site area is typical of northwestern Ontario's boreal region, with some species being rare or regionally uncommon. The signature site provides riparian, wetland and island environments, important for critical life stages of some species of mammals and birds. The signature site provides habitat that may be important for certain species at risk in Ontario (i.e., forest-dwelling woodland caribou, wolverine).

The management intent for wildlife is to help ensure healthy wildlife populations and to support protection of species at risk by sustainable management of land uses and resources in the signature site.

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13 The term riparian means areas adjacent to a stream, river, lake or wetland where there is an influence of water on the vegetation. These areas typically have a high density, diversity and productivity of plant species relative to nearby uplands, and provide important habitat for many wildlife species.

Direction

Most wildlife species in Ontario are conserved through landscape-level (i.e., wildlife management units) and local management (e.g., trap-line management). Provincial wildlife management guidelines will be applied to activities in the Miniss Enhanced Management Area. Enhanced habitat protection strategies may be incorporated into the management plans for the park and the EMA.

Wildlife studies and species at risk research will continue in the signature site. Future resource management decisions will rely on thorough and accurate information on wildlife use and habitat needs, particularly with respect to rare and significant habitat. Traditional Aboriginal knowledge of wildlife use will be important in resource management planning. Participation of Aboriginal people in wildlife management activities, resource management planning, information gathering and analysis, and public education is encouraged.

3.1.16.1 Woodland Caribou

Forest-dwelling woodland caribou are threatened in Ontario. As part of a larger naturally changing landscape, the signature site provides winter habitat for woodland caribou, as well as summer calving and nursery areas. Since woodland caribou have home ranges that extend beyond (and exist outside of) the signature site, management for this species is considered at a landscape level.

Woodland caribou habitat will be considered in management planning for St. Raphael Provincial Park through appropriate zoning and stewardship policies. The presence of many lakes and riparian areas in St. Raphael Provincial Park, as well as its linear nature, naturally protect caribou calving and nursery areas as well as potential travel corridors. Survey work and monitoring will continue for this species at risk (e.g., monitoring caribou response to roads, and forest operations in the Miniss Enhanced Management Area).

Woodland caribou conservation in the Miniss Enhanced Management Area will be supported by the use of forest management guidelines and any additional direction developed in the enhanced management area resource management plan. This may include operational timing windows, lower density and construction standards of roads, and requirements for deactivation of roads (see Sections 3.1.8 and 3.1.10: Forestry and Land-based Access). Protection of significant summer habitat will be a management planning priority. Woodland caribou conservation education will be directed to recreational users through tourism operators and other initiatives.

The Province of Ontario is developing a recovery strategy for forest-dwelling woodland caribou. Recovery plans identify ways to manage and improve the status of species at risk and their habitat, and provide approaches to mitigate further decline. Where applicable, woodland caribou recovery requirements will be integrated into land use and resource management plans for the signature site.

3.1.16.2 Wolverine

The wolverine is the largest member of the weasel family. It has been listed as a provincially threatened species due to habitat loss and over-harvesting. The Ontario Boreal Wolverine Project commenced in August 2002 through work by the Wolverine Foundation, in partnership with the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Wildlife Conservation Society of Canada. The purpose of this research is to identify wolverine range in northwestern Ontario and make recommendations regarding the habitat needs of this species. When wolverine management guidelines are completed and approved by the Ministry of Natural Resources, they will be integrated into land use and resource management plans where applicable.

3.1.16.3 Bald Eagle

Bald eagles and eagle nesting sites were identified in the signature site. The bald eagle was listed as a provincially endangered species until 2006. Populations have greatly improved since the species was provided legal protection under Ontario's Endangered Species Act in 1973. Bald eagle habitat will continue to be considered in management planning for St. Raphael Provincial Park, and protected through appropriate zoning and stewardship policies. Bald eagle habitat conservation in the Miniss Enhanced Management Area will continue to be supported by the use of provincial habitat management guidelines. As a species of special concern, the bald eagle will continue to be considered as a featured species in forest management planning. The Ministry of Natural Resources will also review all access management plans, work permit applications, land disposition requests and development proposals to ensure that bald eagle habitat is adequately considered in the signature site.

4.0 Next Steps

4.1 Strategy Use

This signature site strategy provides broad direction for Crown land uses and resource management in St. Raphael Signature Site. The strategy is a guide for the development of the park management plan for St. Raphael Provincial Park and the resource management plan for the Miniss Enhanced Management Area.

Management plans for the signature site area must be consistent with direction in this signature site strategy. Amendments to resource management documents (e.g., forest management plans) may be necessary.

4.2 Implementation

The Ministry of Natural Resources will direct the implementation of the St. Raphael Signature Site Strategy. Activities recommended or sanctioned in this document will be subject to the requirements of the Environmental Assessment Act and other applicable legislation, policies and guidelines.

4.2.1 Action Statements

As noted throughout this strategy, management approaches have been developed to achieve sustainable resource management consistent with the vision for St. Raphael Signature Site. In total, twenty-nine action items were produced at this stage of signature site planning, which are explained in the following section. These will be initiated by MNR:

- after signature site strategy approval (e.g., fisheries review),
- as required during park and EMA plan development (e.g., examining the potential for developing a front-country recreation area at Minchin Lake),
- once industry and (possibly) park operations are underway (e.g., monitoring of water crossings),
- as partners come forward with proposals (e.g., maintenance of recreation facilities); and,
- as funding permits (e.g., production of information brochures).

Action items will be implemented through subsequent management planning and will be factored into the ministry's annual business planning.

Other management strategies that have been articulated in this document (e.g., road standards) will be elaborated on in the management plans for the park and the EMA.

Action items are as follows:

Education Opportunities
- Produce a detailed recreation map for St. Raphael Provincial Park.
- Provide educational and interpretive material at primary use areas and access points.
- Develop web-based information.
- Produce a back-country trip planning guide.
- Develop other materials to promote values and sustainable resource use (e.g., promote use of lead-free fishing tackle).

Inventory
- Collect trail information from existing users to support access management planning.
- Complete inventory of back-country campsites and shore-lunch sites.
- Continue to collect wildlife use and landform vegetation information.
- Continue survey work to identify caribou calving sites, wintering areas and travel patterns.

Monitoring, Enforcement and Safety
- Monitor roads with public access restrictions; enforce road and trail use restrictions.
- Actively monitor water crossings and other potential point sources of pollution and/or sedimentation.
- Monitor caribou response to roads and forest operations in the Miniss Enhanced Management Area.
- Inspect tourism operations to ensure facilities are in conformity with signature site policies.
- Encourage private-land stewardship by the tourism operator on Hooker Lake through discussion and correspondence.
- Monitor recreational uses near sensitive sites in St. Raphael Provincial Park.
- Assess traditional recreation access points from Highway 599 for safety and accessibility; set up access controls where necessary.
- Close unauthorized trails; install access controls and conduct rehabilitation where necessary.

Partnerships

- Facilitate economic development opportunities with interested Aboriginal people in the signature site and surrounding area where resources can support the proposed activity.
- Work in partnership with Aboriginal communities to locate, identify and document sites of traditional use significance.
- Seek not-for-profit partnerships with tourism operators, outdoor recreation groups and Aboriginal communities to assist with fisheries work.
- Seek partnerships with tourism operators, outdoor recreation groups and Aboriginal communities to maintain portages and basic facilities in front and back-country camping areas.

Resource Management and Development

- Conduct a fisheries review.
- Contact tourism operators that use lakes with low or decreasing fisheries capacity to discuss fisheries issues, resource conservation and individual business logistics.
- Explore the feasibility of developing a small front-country recreation area at Minchin Lake.
- Explore development of a public access point outside of the signature site.
- Examine the development of a district canoe route protection strategy.
- Add provisions to permit or lease renewals for tourism camps as necessary to ensure approved operations conform to direction in this strategy.
- Once the park management plan is complete, transfer condition for Bear Management Areas to each Licence to Provide Bear Hunting Services for the portions of BMAs in the park.
- When available, integrate woodland caribou recovery guidelines and wolverine management guidelines into local land use and resource management plans.

Completion of the projects and activities described in this strategy are dependent on the availability and allocation of funding in accordance with priorities established by the Government of Ontario and Ministry of Natural Resources' program areas. MNR will pursue opportunities for partnerships with other agencies and interest groups to assist with funding and implementation of the identified action items.

4.3 Monitoring

Monitoring is an integral part of any planning exercise. It provides an assessment of the effectiveness of a plan's management objectives and strategies in achieving its overall goals or vision. Monitoring can foster an adaptive management approach to area-specific policies. Adaptive management involves examining activities and outcomes, then incorporating "lessons learned" into further management of those activities to achieve the desired outcome.

Both the Miniss Enhanced Area Resource Management Plan and St. Raphael Provincial Park Management Plan will contain area-specific policies and management direction. Examination of the effectiveness of these plans will allow planners and resource managers to measure their success in achieving land use objectives, and ultimately the vision for the signature site.

It is also important to review the effectiveness of the signature site approach to land use and resource management, and of the overarching *St. Raphael Signature Site Strategy* in achieving the vision for the signature site.

Examples of questions to consider are:

- What were the benefits/drawbacks of producing a signature site strategy followed by park and EMA plan?
- Has the signature site strategy approach resulted in more effective integrated resource management as compared to traditional approaches?
- Has the vision for the signature site been achieved 10 and 20 years into the future?

Reviewing the effectiveness of the signature site approach for the St. Raphael area will provide useful information for MNR that will help refine resource planning in the future.

Inspection of commercial resource activities in the signature site (e.g., construction of roads through the park, forestry and mining related activities in the EMA) will provide data to support monitoring of the

strategies' effectiveness. Information provided by the public and commercial users, through data collection and research findings, and from new and innovative techniques, will also support adaptive management in the signature site.

4.4 Strategy Amendments

This signature site strategy is a dynamic tool, projecting forward for a 20-year period. Although there is no intention to carry out a comprehensive review of the strategy at any prescribed interval, new or changed circumstances may require that the document be amended. A request for an amendment to this strategy may be made at any time by a member of the public or interest group, Aboriginal community, or public agency. Amendment proposals must have basis in fact, demonstrate a relationship to the scope of signature site planning, and/or must respond to changing resource conditions, new information, or new/revised government policies. Amendments will not alter the overall vision for St. Raphael Signature Site.

Amendments required to correct errors or omissions, or to update information that is administrative in nature, will be processed following approval by the Ministry of Natural Resources Sioux Lookout district manager and the Ontario Parks northwest zone manager.

Proposed amendments that may alter or affect area-specific land use policies in the signature site will be considered individually and may require public consultation if they have a significant social, economic or environmental impact. Approval will be required by the regional director, Field Services Division, and the managing director, Ontario Parks. These types of amendments may require revisions to resource management plans, which will follow amendment procedures described therein.

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Planning Stages and Products

The *St. Raphael Signature Site Strategy* was developed over a period of six years. The first step in the planning process was to collect data in the signature site. Inventories and data collection efforts are listed below.

- Earth Science Reconnaissance Survey for St. Raphael Provincial Park (2000)
- Fall Walleye Index Netting – Churchill Lake (2000)
- Life Science Reconnaissance Survey for St. Raphael Provincial Park (2000)
- Recreation Inventory for St. Raphael Provincial Park (2001)
- Life Science Inventory for St. Raphael Signature Site (2002)
- Earth Science Inventory for St. Raphael Signature Site (2002)
- Bathymetry Mapping for Lawson, Arc, Taper and Payne lakes (2003)
- Cultural Heritage Values Collection (2001 and 2003)
- Fall Walleye Index Netting on De Lesseps Lake (2004)
- Aerial Caribou Surveys (Winters 2000, 2001, 2003, 2004) (Miniss Lake – Spring 2000)
- Aerial Moose Surveys (Winters 2000, 2003, 2006)

In order to meet consultation requirements, efforts were directed at establishing a comprehensive mailing list of all known stakeholders and interest groups, interested members of the public and regional contacts. Groups and individuals on the Ontario Parks mandatory contact list, and extracts from the Caribou Forest Management Plan mailing list were also included.

The terms of reference for the project was approved in March 2003. It provided an outline of MNR's approach to planning for St. Raphael Signature Site. It was determined that strategic direction for the signature site would initially be developed by establishing broad goals and objectives for the planning area through the preparation of a signature site strategy. The strategy would be an umbrella document defining the strategic direction for the signature site and establishing integrated land use direction and resource management strategies for St. Raphael Provincial Park and for the Miniss Enhanced Management Area. The strategy would guide the preparation of separate management plans for the park and the EMA.

On April 10, 2003, an Invitation to Participate was sent out to individuals and groups on the project mailing list informing them that the planning process for the signature site had begun and of their opportunity to get involved. This mail-out package included a map of the signature site, an executive summary of the terms of reference, and a letter outlining the process and anticipated schedule. Mishkeegogamang First Nation and the Ojibway Nation of Saugeen were contacted separately and consulted on how they wished to participate in the planning process.

With direction from the terms of reference, a steering committee, project team and advisory committee were established. The original project team was further refined into two teams: (1) a focused project team and (2) a broader planning team (see Table 1). This allowed for a smaller working group to coordinate the development of the documents and organize public consultation.

A comprehensive background document presenting the data collected for the signature site was developed during the last half of 2003 and published in January 2004. The *St. Raphael Signature Site Background Document* was prepared to support the development of the signature site strategy, the park management plan and the EMA resource management plan. At this stage, the vision for the signature site was defined.

Following the public review period for the background document, the project/planning team and advisory committee assessed public input to identify issues, define objectives and develop management options. A compilation of this information, the *St. Raphael Signature Site Issues and Options Document*, was published in November 2004.

Public input was analyzed and considered in conjunction with the vision for the signature site, background information, *Ontario's Living Legacy Land Use Strategy* direction, government policy and provincial legislation. Land use and resource management direction was determined and presented in the *St. Raphael Signature Site Preliminary Strategy*. The preliminary strategy was developed during 2005 and published in November of that same year. An issues and options document to support the development of the park management plan was also presented at this time.

Management direction that appears in the *St. Raphael Signature Site Strategy* evolved from the preceding developmental stages. The signature site strategy is a high-level direction statement which will guide the development of a park management plan for St. Raphael Provincial Park and a resource management plan for the Miniss Enhanced Management Area.

Planning Participants

At the onset of the St. Raphael Signature Site project, a number of working groups were formed to support the development of planning products. The role of these groups included providing input and advice, meeting with interest groups, industry and local communities, researching and writing planning documents, and review and approval functions.

Project and Planning Teams

The planning team consisted of government staff across varying ministries, locations and occupations, as well as an Aboriginal community representative (see list of members in Table 1). A smaller working group or project team was also established.

The project team:

- prepared, produced and distributed planning documents,
- held workshops and meetings with the advisory committee,
- conducted and coordinated consultation with the public and stakeholders.

The members of the larger planning team:

- collected field data,
- provided guidance to the project team in their area of expertise,
- reviewed documents,
- ensured that planning documents produced were consistent with MNR legislation, policy, and guidelines, including the Ontario's Living Legacy Land Use Strategy.

Table 1: St. Raphael Signature Site Project/Planning Team Members

Name	*Role/Representation*
Ramona Szyska	MNR Sioux Lookout District – Strategy Author/District Planner
Jaime Hilbert	MNR Sioux Lookout District – Parks Advisor/Park Planner
Kym Thrift	MNR Sioux Lookout District – Research Assistant/Signature Site Intern
Linda Anderson	MNR Sioux Lookout District – Mapping Support/GIS Database Technician

Planning Team

Name	*Position or Representation*
Londa Mortson	Northwest Region Planning Unit
Evan Simpson	Northwest Region Planning Unit
Julie Sullivan	Ontario Parks – Northwest Zone Planner
John Derouin	Mishkeegogamang First Nation
Scott Ellery	Ontario Parks – Park Superintendent
Bob Paterson	MNR Sioux Lookout District – North Area/Information Mgmt. Supervisor
Joe Muli	MNR Sioux Lookout District – Lands
Jeri Graham	MNR Sioux Lookout District – Fisheries and Wildlife
Mike Pettit	MNR Sioux Lookout District – Forestry
Donna Smith	MNR Northwest Region – Communications
Wayne Moxam	MNR – Fire Management
Fred Richardson	Ministry of Northern Development and Mines
Peter Hinz	Ministry of Northern Development and Mines – Geology
Frank Bastone	Ministry of Northern Development and Mines – Tourism

Planning Team

Name	*Position or Representation*
John Thomson*	MNR Sioux Lookout District – District Planner
Glenn Birch*	MNR Sioux Lookout District – Information Management Supervisor
Paul Bielby*	MNR Sioux Lookout District – Information Management Supervisor
Magdalena Kowalczyk*	MNR Sioux Lookout District – Signature Site Intern
Steve Windsor*	MNR Sioux Lookout District – Signature Site Intern
Erin Whitehouse*	MNR Sioux Lookout District – Signature Site Intern
Tina Dumphy*	MNR Sioux Lookout District – Signature Site Intern
Melanie Silver*	MNR Sioux Lookout District – Signature Site Intern/GIS Assistant
Christine Baljko*	MNR Sioux Lookout District – Resource Planner
Meeri Kerik*	MNR Sioux Lookout District – Park Planner
Christine Friedrichsmeier*	MNR Sioux Lookout District – Biology
Steve Allen*	MNR Sioux Lookout District – Forestry
Nicole Combot*	MNR Sioux Lookout District – Area Technician
Janice Christian*	MNR Sioux Lookout District – Senior IRM Technician
Andreas Lichtblau*	Ministry of Northern Development and Mines – Geology
Abraham Dorst*	Ministry of Northern Development and Mines – Geology

* Denotes participants active during earlier development of the signature site strategy or supporting documents.

Steering Committee

A steering committee was established to ensure linkages between planning and corporate direction. The steering committee provided direction to the project team when required and reviewed all final documents prior to approval (see list of members in Table 2).

Table 2: St. Raphael Signature Site Steering Committee Members

Name	*Position*
Barton Feilders	Manager, Planning and Research, Ontario Parks
Ron Waito	Manager, Northwest Region Planning Unit
Tim Sullivan	Northwest Zone Manager, Ontario Parks
Frank Bastone	Northern Development Advisor, MNDM
Bob Paterson	North Area/Information Management Supervisor, Sioux Lookout District
Bob David	District Manager, Sioux Lookout District
Glenn Birch*	Information Management Supervisor, Sioux Lookout District
Paul Bielby*	Information Management Supervisor, Sioux Lookout District
Al Mathews*	District Manager, Sioux Lookout District

* Denotes participants active during earlier development of the signature site strategy or supporting documents.

St. Raphael Signature Site Advisory Committee

The advisory committee consisted of members that represented a wide variety of interests. The advisory committee was established to provide advice to the project team during the preparation of the St. Raphael Signature Site Strategy and supporting documents. The role of the advisory committee was to assist in the development, identification and description of management objectives, strategies, challenges and issues, to review the work of the project team, and to make recommendations on improving public consultation efforts (see list of members in Table 3).

Table 3: St. Raphael Signature Site Advisory Committee Members

Name	*Affiliation*
Allan Lago	Anglers and Hunters
Mary Kenny	Environment
Ted Frisby	Forestry
Michael Quince	Local Citizens Committee
Allan Best	Mining
Robert Briskett	Mishkeegogamang First Nation
John Derouin	Mishkeegogamang First Nation
Tom Waasaykeesic	Mishkeegogamang First Nation
Ernie Leschied	Resource Harvesting
Tom Terry	Tourism – Back-country
Jacob Latto	Tourism – Facility-based
George Seaton	Township of Pickle Lake
Kathy Poling*	Municipality of Sioux Lookout
Neville Bosworth*	Environment

* Denotes participants active during early development of the signature site strategy or supporting documents.

Public consultation was very important in developing the St. Raphael Signature Site Strategy. Within this Appendix, consultation efforts and public input related to each public review period has been summarized (see Table 1 and Stages 1 – 4). Public correspondence and consultation efforts not related to the public review periods for planning products has not been summarized, although was considered in signature site planning. This information is held at the Sioux Lookout District Office and may be available subject to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

Further, issues raised during public consultation that were outside of the mandate of this planning exercise have also been summarized and MNR's response for each issue has been provided (see Table 2). Finally, a summary of media coverage for this project has been supplied (see Table 3).

Summary of Public/Aboriginal Consultation

Table 1: Quantitative Summary of Public Involvement up to Preliminary Strategy Stage

	Planning Stage	*Mailing List Distribution*	*Open House Attendance*	*Input Received*
1/2	Invitation to Participate/ Terms of Reference	336	n/a	32 Letters/Verbal
3	Background Document	349	Mishkeegogamang 15 Pickle Lake 14 Savant Lake 10 Sioux Lookout 32	20 Letters/Verbal
4	Signature Site Issues and Options Document	350	Mishkeegogamang 8 Pickle Lake 8 Savant Lake 10 Sioux Lookout 19	14 Response Booklets 11 Letters
5	Preliminary Strategy Park Management Issues and Options	378	Pickle Lake 10 Savant Lake 8 Sioux Lookout 10	34 Letters 9 Verbal 7 Response Booklets

Stage 1 and 2: Invitation to Participate and to Inspect the Approved Terms of Reference

Public Review: *February 26 to May 24, 2003*

A proposal notice was posted on the Environmental Bill of Rights (EBR) Registry on February 26, 2003. The terms of reference was also posted on the internet at this same time.

During the week of March 2 to March 5, 2003, advertisements requesting participation in the signature site planning process were provided in the Dryden Observer, the Chronicle Journal (Thunder Bay), the Ignace Driftwood, the Sioux Lookout Bulletin and the Wawatay News (with Oji-Cree Translation).

On April 10, 2003, an invitation to participate was provided to 336 interested parties, including Aboriginal communities, interest groups, stakeholders and members of the public. Each invitation package included a map of the signature site, an executive summary of the terms of reference, and a letter outlining the planning process and schedule.

Two meetings were held with Mishkeegogamang First Nation members during the public review period, one occurring at the MNR district office, and the other at the Mishkeegogamang band office. Telephone contact was made with the Ojibway Nation of Saugeen and additional information regarding the planning process was mailed on May 8, 2003.

Summary of comments received during review period:

- requests for additional information following the general mail out
- concerns included loss of wildlife habitat in the EMA due to forestry activities, and that the size of the buffer zone around the park was too small
- nominations for the advisory committee
- requests to be placed on the mailing list
- a representative for hunting and a separate representative for fishing should sit on the advisory committee instead of one person speaking to both interests
- harvesting and roads in the EMA are inappropriate
- comments and suggestions on the Interim Management Statement and the inventories
- issues regarding treaty rights and Mishkeegogamang's involvement in the planning and management of the signature site
- Mishkeegogamang expressed interest in pursuing economic opportunities within the signature site

Stage 3: Signature Site Background Information

***Public Review:** January 28 to March 13, 2004*

Newspaper announcements for this public review period were placed in the Sioux Lookout Bulletin on January 14, 2004 and in the Wawatay News on January 15, 2004. In addition, *Get Involved!* postcards were sent to individuals on the project mailing list on January 15, 2004 outlining dates and locations of the open houses. On January 27, 2004 packages were mailed to 349 interested parties. Each package included one *St. Raphael Signature Site Background Document* and a letter indicating that comments on this document would be accepted until March 13, 2004.

A proposal notice was posted on the EBR Registry on January 28 with a summary of the planning process to date, of the planning document, and of the 45-day public review period through until March 13, 2004. The background document and an executive summary were also posted on the internet. The executive summary was provided in English, French and Ojibway.

Open houses were held in Mishkeegogamang First Nation and in Pickle Lake on January 20 and 27, 2004, in Sioux Lookout on January 21 and 28, 2004 and in Savant Lake on January 22 and 29, 2004. During the first set of open houses, the *St. Raphael Signature Site Background Document* was presented to attendants. The second series of open houses were set up in a workshop format. Attendants were asked to discuss questions and identify possible strategies relating to signature site planning.

Summary of comments received during review period:

- EMA should be reclassified as a wilderness or recreation area
- logging within the signature site should not be allowed
- roads are a major concern to the tourism industry
- increased access will jeopardize remote character
- limiting public access will result in decreased economic benefits for local area
- concerns about the success of access restriction measures
- concerns that limits on air traffic will negatively impact existing fly in tourism
- conflicting views on future development of ATV trails
- caribou habitat will be destroyed by logging activities in the EMA
- green corridors should be developed between St. Raphael and Wabakimi provincial parks
- concern about apparent over-allocation of fishery on some lakes
- concerns regarding bed-capacity management
- park boundaries should be expanded to provide adequate protection for caribou
- critical caribou calving sites in the EMA should be included in the park
- issues related to harvesting, use and possession of bait-fish
- Mishkeegogamang First Nation requested changes be made to the planning process
- cultural site protection is important
- Aboriginal communities are interested in projects that would benefit the area and residents
- the Mishkeegogamang community had a commercial fishing licence on St. Raphael Lake 30 years ago and are not clear why it was taken away

Stage 4: Signature Site Issues and Options

Public Review: *November 26, 2004 to January 10, 2005*

Newspaper advertisements announcing the release of the *St. Raphael Signature Site Issues and Options Document* were placed in the Sioux Lookout Bulletin on November 17 and 24, 2004, the Wawatay News on November 18, 2004, and the Ignace Driftwood on November 17, 2004. In addition, 350 *Get Involved!* postcards were mailed on November 16, 2004 providing open house dates and locations. On November 17, 2004, a flyer outlining open house details was delivered to all post office boxes in Pickle Lake, Savant Lake and Mishkeegogamang First Nation. A display board promoting the signature site and open houses was placed in the Sioux Lookout Public Library on November 15, 2004 until mid-January 2005. Contact was also made with the Mishkeegogamang radio station by fax on November 24, 2004.

A proposal notice was posted on the EBR Registry on November 26, 2004 with a summary of the planning process to date, of the planning document, and of the 45-day public review period through until January 10, 2005. The issues and options document was also posted on the internet on November 25, 2004. Information packages for this stage were sent to 350 interested parties on the project mailing list. The package included one *St. Raphael Signature Site Issues and Options Document*, and a letter indicating that public comment on the document would be accepted until January 10, 2004. The letter also provided a link to the EBR Registry posting.

Open houses were held in Mishkeegogamang on December 2 and 8, 2004; Pickle Lake on December 1 and 7, 2004; Savant Lake on December 3 and 9, 2004; and Sioux Lookout on December 2 and 8, 2004.

Summary of comments received during review period:

- logging should not be allowed
- it is a remote wilderness area and it should be kept that way
- access to the area for the public should not be increased
- limiting public access will result in decreased economic benefits for the local area
- access restrictions don't work
- woodland caribou habitat will be destroyed by logging activities in the EMA
- environment is under-represented on the advisory committee and there is no environmental representation on the planning team
- signature site should be left as a remote roadless area
- concern over ATV and snowmobile use on logging roads
- disturbance of forest cover will contribute to a shift in bird species
- establish green corridors to link protected areas and sustain healthy wildlife
- expansion of tourism lodges within the park/EMA should be limited
- new tourism lodges should be placed outside the park/EMA
- roads within the park/EMA should be restored
- failure to recognize that ecological integrity should be the first priority in provincial parks
- motorboat use should be limited
- should determine how to best buffer the site from impacts of activities outside its boundary
- desire for additional road crossings of the park (i.e., to access forestry blocks to the north of the signature site)
- should be no major development in the signature site
- provincial importance of the signature site has not been taken into account in planning
- boundary issues presented at earlier stages were ignored
- road development and logging will threaten cultural, historical and recreational sites
- a comprehensive study of cultural and historical sites in the signature site should be completed before any development occurs
- access points for the public to enter the park for canoeing and camping should be developed
- land/water-based access to the park from the west and south suitable for motorboat use should be developed
- the objectives are inconsistent with the land use strategy and could result in additional constraints on industry
- aerial spraying is a concern
- a petition (218 names) on behalf of Mishkeegogamang First Nation was submitted to Roger Valley, MP with regards to St. Raphael Signature Site

On January 10, 2005, the final day of the public review period, there was a peaceful First Nation demonstration held outside the Sioux Lookout MNR District Office. Comments included:

- the process is flawed
- (there was) no consultation
- concerns about forest harvesting
- decisions affecting their trap lines and treaty area were made without their input
- accusations of polluting water, chasing away wildlife, and killing fish
- accusations of not listening to First Nation views or interests,
- MNR is working with multi-national corporations.
- advised that MNR would be receiving direction to stop the signature site from a lawyer working for the Ojibway Nation of Saugeen

Stage 5: Preliminary Strategy and Park Issues and Options

Public Review: *November 22, 2005 to January 6, 2006*

On November 17, 2005 a letter was sent to project advisors (previous advisory committee) advising of the upcoming public comment period, providing thanks for their input to date, and encouraging them to review planning documents. Copies of the *St. Raphael Signature Site Preliminary Strategy* and the *St. Raphael Provincial Park Management Issues and Options* document were then sent to advisors on December 2, 2005.

On November 21, 2005 a letter was mailed to the 365 interested parties on the St. Raphael Signature Site mailing list. The letter included the following information: a brief description of the *St. Raphael Signature Site Preliminary Strategy* and *St. Raphael Provincial Park Management Issues and Options* documents, information on how to view/request copies of the documents, open house dates, and notification about the public comment period. In addition to the letter, a *Get Involved!* postcard was inserted which provided open house dates and locations, and options for viewing planning documents. A proposal notice was posted on the EBR Registry on November 22, 2005 with a summary of the planning process to date, of the planning documents, and of the 45-day public review period through until January 6, 2006. The planning documents were also made available on the internet.

On November 23, 2005 a letter was sent to Mishkeegogamang First Nation and the Ojibway Nation of Saugeen with information about the release of planning documents and the associated public comment period and open houses. The letter also offered to arrange a meeting with each respective community to discuss signature site planning. On December 13, 2005, a letter was sent to Mishkeegogamang First Nation and the Ojibway Nation of Saugeen along with several copies of a guide created to inform community members about St. Raphael Signature Site. The *St. Raphael Signature Site and Aboriginal Communities: an Information Guide* was provided in both English and Ojibway.

Announcements for the public review period and open houses were placed in the Sioux Lookout Bulletin on November 30, 2005 and in the Wawatay News on December 1, 2005. Advertisements similar to those in the newspapers were delivered to 276 mailboxes in Pickle Lake and 82 mailboxes in Savant Lake on December 2, 2005. Advertisements were also delivered to 2059 mailboxes in Sioux Lookout and 300 mailboxes in Hudson on December 5, 2005. A display board to promote the signature site and open houses was placed in the Sioux Lookout Public Library from approximately December 1, 2005 to January 6, 2006. Community announcements for open houses were faxed to the Mishkeegogamang radio station and CBLS/CBQW community radio (Sioux Lookout) on December 6, 2005.

Open houses were held in Pickle Lake on December 6, 2005, in Savant Lake on December 7, 2005, and in Sioux Lookout on December 8, 2005. Although open houses had been held previously in the community of Mishkeegogamang First Nation, the project team was advised that the community would not be consenting to further presentations until the new year.

Summary of comments received during review period:

- ecological integrity is not being protected
- there is not enough protection of woodland caribou
- woodland caribou protection is not compatible with forestry and road building
- more is required to protect biodiversity and species at risk in the signature site
- various concerns around fisheries management and inventories
- public comments from previous stages have not been incorporated in planning documents

- comments for and against motorboat and horsepower restrictions
- trails for off-road motorcycle and vehicle use should remain open
- the advisory committee did not have enough representation from environmental interests
- remote access should be maintained to protect remote tourism and recreation values
- how will forestry be managed differently in the EMA
- logging should not occur in the EMA
- how will remote character be maintained with forestry and road access
- concerns about trapping restrictions in the park
- concerns about the ability of Aboriginals to continue with traditional activities
- signature site strategy objectives are contradictory
- bait fishing should be phased out of the park
- questions around compliance and monitoring of access
- park restrictions only benefit a small group (e.g., tourism operators, canoeists, non-residents)
- commercial fishing should not be permitted
- the strategy should be consistent with the Land Use Strategy
- forestry direction should not be prescriptive
- the canoe route information needs to be consistent with forest management planning maps
- recreational use of the park by local residents should be allowed to continue
- proposed park restrictions will have negative impacts on tourism businesses

Matters Outside of the Mandate of Signature Site Planning

All comments received during project development were reviewed during the St. Raphael planning exercise. Questions or concerns raised that were outside of the mandate of this planning process are described in Table 2.

Table 2: Matters outside of the mandate of St. Raphael Signature Site planning

Questions/Suggestions/Concerns	*MNR Response*
Miniss EMA should be added to St. Raphael Provincial Park. Miniss EMA should be changed from a remote access EMA to a fish and wildlife or recreation EMA. Boundary changes are necessary.	The terms of reference does not include a review of park boundaries, land use designations or reassignment of EMA categories.
Opposition of roads in the signature site.	Park policy allows forest road crossing of waterway parks. Roads in the EMA are required to support certain commercial activities as per Ontario's Living Legacy Land Use Strategy.
Support for public use of roads in the EMA.	Public use of roads in the EMA will be restricted as per Ontario's Living Legacy Land Use Strategy.
Opposition to forestry in signature site.	Forestry is permitted in Enhanced Management Areas as per Ontario's Living Legacy Land Use Strategy.
Herbicide spraying should not be allowed in the signature site.	Herbicide application is not permitted in St. Raphael Provincial Park but may be permitted in the Miniss EMA as part of forest management operations. Herbicide application is a provincially accepted method of treating forest harvest blocks.
The Ontario government should revise the Provincial Parks Act.	The Ontario Provincial Parks Act is in the process of being revised.

Why is high value caribou habitat slated for harvest, while mature wood is not being cut? Woodland caribou habitat needs to be protected. There is concern over the effects of logging and roads on woodland caribou. Concern that the *Forest Management Guidelines for the Conservation of Woodland Caribou* is not enough to protect the caribou. All high value caribou habitat should be in the park. There is significant overlap of high quality winter caribou habitat and proposed logging operations.	Decisions regarding age of stands harvested are considered during forest management planning and must consider issues such as wood supply, wood costs, signature site values (e.g., caribou habitat), etc. In forest management planning, caribou habitat is conserved through the application of landscape-level management approaches, provincial guidelines, and by incorporating advice from MNR biologists. In the EMA, woodland caribou will be managed consistent with landscape-level approaches used across the Caribou Forest Management Unit. St. Raphael Provincial Park contributes to woodland caribou protection as the area contains travel corridors, and calving and nursery areas. St. Raphael Provincial Park can contribute to the protection of specific woodland caribou habitat values; however, the park can not by itself provide a complete range of caribou habitat requirements. This is accomplished through landscape-level planning and management.
There was a desire of some stakeholders to explore modified and experimental forest harvesting practices such as helicopter logging.	Helicopter logging is not economical and is generally a harvesting method used in mountainous areas where road construction is not feasible.
No mining in the Miniss EMA.	EMAs are considered as lands open for mineral exploration and mining activities as per the Mining Act.
Bait harvesting, bear management areas and trapping should be prohibited in the park. Existing trap-lines should be closed if they are no longer in use to reduce impacts on wildlife.	Under provincial park policy, bait block operations, bear management area operations and trapping are permitted to continue in provincial parks created during the Ontario's Living Legacy land use planning process.
There is concern that Resource Stewardship Agreements are developed without other parties present.	Resource Stewardship Agreements (RSAs) are business agreements between the resource-based tourism industry and forest companies. During forest management plan development, interested individuals may attend Information Centres and may submit comments to the forest management planning team to express matters of interest or concern. A Local Citizens Committee (LCC) also has membership that represents the public interest. LCC members may be contacted to discuss and bring forward matters of public concern.
Tourism facilities in the park should be considered a non-conforming use. There should be no new establishments.	Park policy and direction in Ontario's Living Legacy Land Use Strategy allow for tourism operations to continue in provincial parks. New operations must support the vision for the signature site.
A 'green-corridor' should be created between St. Raphael Signature Site and Wabakimi Provincial Park	The mandate of St. Raphael Signature Site planning is for the signature site only.

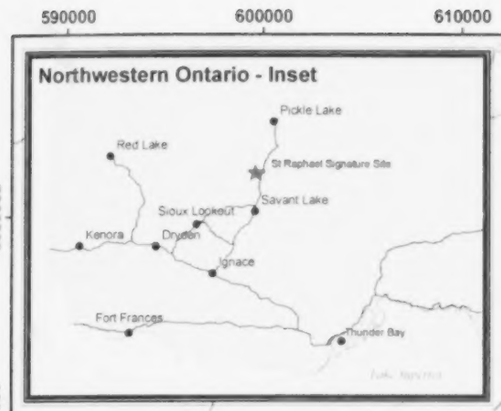
There should be a five year moratorium on the St. Raphael Signature Site planning process.	The provincial government has directed that planning for St. Raphael Signature Site be ongoing until the completion of the signature site strategy, a park management plan and an enhanced management area resource management plan.
There are concerns about the fisheries models used.	The Thermal-Optical-Habitat model (TOHA) estimates the maximum sustainable walleye fishery yield. This model was recently included in one of the "Percid Community Synthesis Reports" in February 2004 as the best means of estimating productivity of walleye lakes.
Prior consultation did not meet First Nation needs during park designation.	First Nations' representatives had an opportunity to review the Lands for Life round table recommendations, and had the opportunity to review the draft Ontario's Living Legacy Land Use Strategy which included the designation of signature sites, provincial parks, conservation reserves and EMAs.

Media Coverage

Throughout the planning process there was interest in the St. Raphael Signature Site project by local media (see Table 3). Local newspaper and radio reporters interviewed project staff about the signature site initiative throughout the planning process. This media attention served to raise the profile of the project, and expanded public awareness and consultation opportunities.

Table 3: Media Coverage of St. Raphael Signature Site Planning

Media Organization	*Date*	*Title of Piece*
Kenora Daily Miner & News	March 20, 2003	St. Raphael protect area now
The Sioux Lookout Bulletin	May 28, 2003	St. Raphael home to many unique features
The Sioux Lookout Bulletin	April 30, 2003	Letter to the Editor
The Sioux Lookout Bulletin	March 12, 2003	Ontario's Living Legacy designates Provincial Park as protected area
The Outfitter (NOTO)	Winter Issue 2003	NOTO Investigates St. Raphael "Bumps-Up"
The Sioux Lookout Bulletin	September 3, 2003	Tourist operators await MOE decision
Kenora Daily Miner and News	September 8, 2003	Still awaiting decision
The Sioux Lookout Bulletin	October 1, 2003	St. Raphael Advisory Committee raises concerns over relevance
The Sioux Lookout Bulletin	February 4, 2004	MNR meets with community to discuss managing of park
The Sioux Lookout Bulletin	August 4, 2004	Issues and options document next step in St. Raphael Signature Site planning, says MNR
The Sioux Lookout Bulletin	September 8, 2004	Letter to the Editor
The Sioux Lookout Bulletin	December 15, 2004	Feedback needed for St. Raphael Signature Site
Wawatay Radio	January 10, 2005	Interview with reporter Bill Morris
Wawatay News	January 13, 2005	Our Land
The Sioux Lookout Bulletin	January 19, 2005	Protest action taken against St. Raphael Signature Site
CBC Radio Thunder Bay	April 5, 2005	First Nation Roadblocks
The Sioux Lookout Bulletin	June 29, 2005	St. Raphael project proceeds, but opposition remains
The Sioux Lookout Bulletin	January 4, 2006	St. Raphael open house photo and caption



St Raphael Signature Site

Figure 1

- Mainbase Lodge/Outpost - Crownland
- Mainbase Lodge/Outpost - Patent Land

St Raphael Signature Site

- St Raphael Provincial Park
- Enhanced Management Area
- Selected Industry Access Point

- Canoe Route
- Portage
- Recreational Snowmobile Trail
- Primary Road
- Secondary Road
- Tertiary Road
- Wabakimi Provincial Park
- Forest Management Unit Boundary
- First Nation

Mishkeegogamang (Osnaburgh)

Ojibway Nation of Saugeen

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This map is for illustration only. Do not rely on it as being a precise indicator of routes, location of features, or as a guide to navigation.

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Sioux Lookout District
Information Management Team

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Cover photos: large photo: tombolo in St. Raphael Provincial Park (MNR Sioux Lookout), small photos: caribou swimming (Forest Management Branch's Image Database), canoeing in St. Raphael Provincial Park (MNR Sioux Lookout), area technician at work (MNR Sioux Lookout), floatplane landing (MNR Sioux Lookout).

Additional copies of this publication are obtainable from the Ministry of Natural Resources Sioux Lookout District Office

49 Prince St. (Box 309)
Sioux Lookout, ON
P8T 1A6

Telephone: (807) 737-1140

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